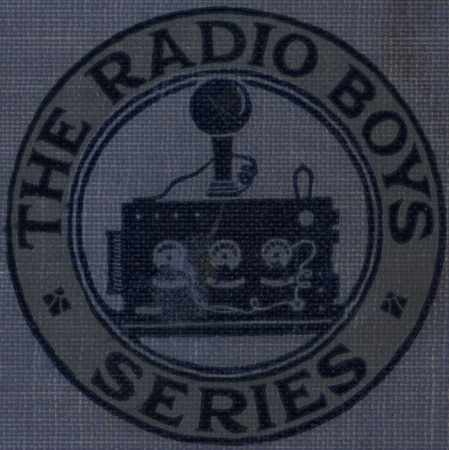
THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND



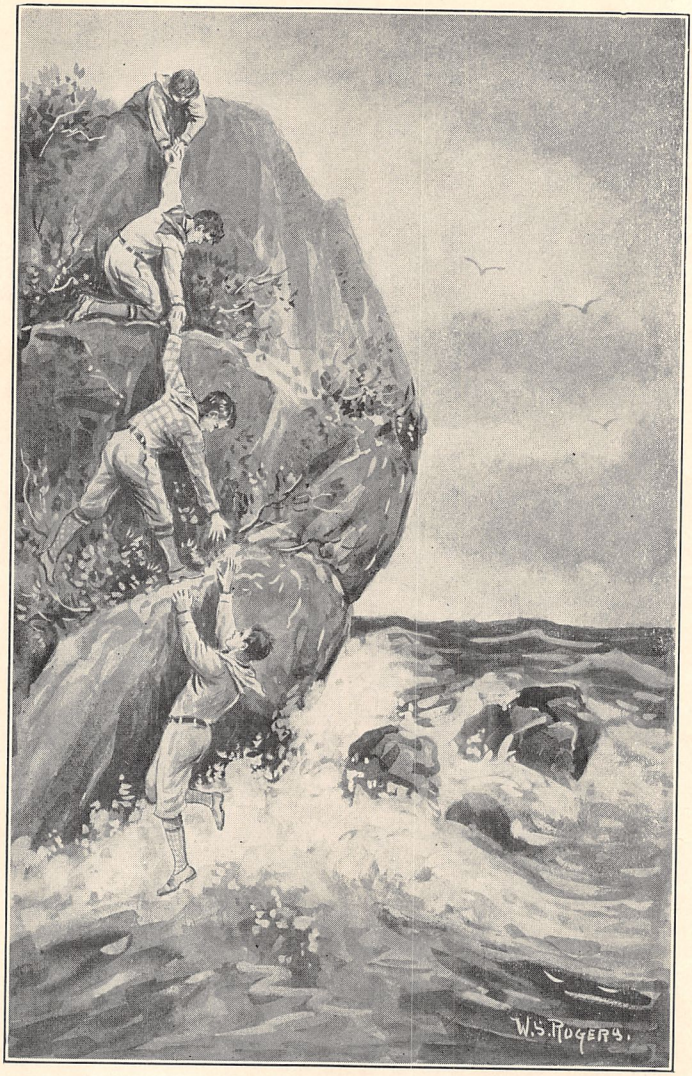
ALLEN CHAPMAN

~~Alfred Merkin~~ 52

~~Alfred Merkin~~

Jack Billing Jr.

THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND



BOB'S HAND FELL JUST SHORT OF JOE'S FINGERS.

The Radio Boys on Signal Island. *Page* 135

THE RADIO BOYS SERIES
(Trademark Registered)

THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND

OR

WATCHING FOR THE SHIPS OF MYSTERY

BY

ALLEN CHAPMAN

AUTHOR OF

THE RADIO BOYS' FIRST WIRELESS
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE ICEBERG PATROL
RALPH OF THE ROUNDHOUSE
RALPH, THE TRAIN DISPATCHER, ETC.

WITH FOREWORD BY

JACK BINNS

ILLUSTRATED BY

WALTER S. ROGERS

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

Made in the United States of America

BOOKS FOR BOYS

BY ALLEN CHAPMAN

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

THE RADIO BOYS SERIES

(Trademark Registered)

THE RADIO BOYS' FIRST WIRELESS
Or Winning the Ferberton Prize
THE RADIO BOYS AT OCEAN POINT
Or The Message that Saved the Ship
THE RADIO BOYS AT THE SENDING STATION
Or Making Good in the Wireless Room
THE RADIO BOYS AT MOUNTAIN PASS
Or The Midnight Call for Assistance
THE RADIO BOYS TRAILING A VOICE
Or Solving a Wireless Mystery
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FOREST RANGERS
Or The Great Fire on Spruce Mountain
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE ICEBERG PATROL
Or Making Safe the Ocean Lanes
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FLOOD FIGHTERS
Or Saving the City in the Valley
THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND
Or Watching for the Ships of Mystery

THE RAILROAD SERIES

RALPH OF THE ROUNDHOUSE
Or Bound to Become a Railroad Man
RALPH IN THE SWITCH TOWER
Or Clearing the Track
RALPH ON THE ENGINE
Or The Young Fireman of the Limited Mail
RALPH ON THE OVERLAND EXPRESS
Or The Trials and Triumphs of a Young Engineer
RALPH, THE TRAIN DISPATCHER
Or The Mystery of the Pay Car
RALPH ON THE ARMY TRAIN
Or The Young Railroader's Most Daring Exploit
RALPH ON THE MIDNIGHT FLYER
Or The Wreck at Shadow Valley
RALPH AND THE MISSING MAIL POUCH
Or The Stolen Government Bonds

GROSSET & DUNLAP, Publishers, New York

COPYRIGHT, 1926, BY
GROSSET & DUNLAP

The Radio Boys on Signal Island

FOREWORD

By Jack Binns

The story of the Radio Boys on Signal Island emphasizes the keen wit and resource which are developed in our youth through the medium of a good hobby; and of all hobbies there is none more fascinating than radio. The boyhood of America, more than any other nation, has been absorbed with radio since Marconi first demonstrated its practical use.

It is an inspiring thing to look back into the history of great names in radio. Ten or twenty years ago the men whose names are now familiar to all were Radio Boys. They dabbled with the new art much in the same manner as the heroes of this book. Its mysteries only served as spurs to urge them on to the solutions which have given us entertainment undreamed of in their youth.

There stands immediately before us the possibility of talking across the Atlantic Ocean with the same ease and reliability as we now talk from one part of a city to another. Then in the not too distant future there will be unfolded to us a means

to transmit and receive moving pictures by radio—in other words we will be able to see the person to whom we are talking as though he or she were right before us. We will see them in all reality and be able to watch their every move. Radio Boys now grown to manhood will give us these additional aids to our rapidly growing universal civilization.

The use to which the Radio Boys put their apparatus in this story of Signal Island is an example of one of the myriad purposes to which radio waves can serve us. In this alone it is important, aside from the thrilling and healthy story of boyhood adventure.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A Thrill of Terror	9
II	Cornered by the Tiger	18
III	In the Nick of Time	28
IV	A Wild Chase	35
V	The Struggle on the Roof	43
VI	Good Luck	53
VII	The Mysterious Message	65
VIII	A Hint of Danger	83
IX	Retreat or Go Forward?	91
X	A Close Shave	98
XI	Getting Their Bearings	107
XII	On the Scout	115
XIII	Over the Cliff	124
XIV	By a Hair's-breadth	131
XV	Through the Trapdoor	137
XVI	An Ugly Customer	148
XVII	The Muzzle of the Gun	155
XVIII	The Mystery Deepens	161

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIX	The Secret Drawer	169
XX	A Startling Discovery	178
XXI	A Queer Boatload	185
XXII	Captured	194
XXIII	To the Rescue	202
XXIV	In Hot Pursuit	209
XXV	Finding the Treasure	216

THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND

CHAPTER I

A THRILL OF TERROR

"If this fair for the benefit of the high school athletic fund doesn't rake in a lot of coin, it won't be because we haven't worked hard," remarked Bob Layton, as he tested the receiving set he had been adjusting.

"You said a mouthful!" assented Jimmy Plummer, as he wiped his forehead and tried to assume a wan and haggard expression. "If we have to plug much longer, I'll be worn to a shadow."

As Jimmy was shaped on the general plan of a barrel, his plaintive moan failed to elicit any sympathy.

"Shadow!" gibed Herb Fennington. "You could lose fifty pounds and never miss it."

"I'd hate to have that shadow fall on me," observed Joe Atwood, with a grin. "I'd be spread out as flat as a pancake."

"Speaking of pancakes reminds me," said Jimmy, as he reached into his pocket and brought out a doughnut.

"And it reminds me that there may be another doughnut in your other pocket," remarked Herb, as he deftly abstracted the same and danced out of reach.

Jimmy made a dive for him but missed. Herb put the table between them and munched the doughnut with keen relish and many expressions of satisfaction.

"It's for your own good, Jimmy," he said tantalizingly. "It isn't that I want the doughnut, but I know you're eating too many of them."

"Crook!" said Jimmy scathingly. "I didn't know I had to have a padlock on my pocket when I got with this bunch. I'll know what to do after this."

"You needn't include Joe and me," laughed Bob Layton. "We didn't swipe your doughnut."

"No," said Joe Atwood. "Herb beat us to it."

Jimmy Plummer favored the three gibing boys with a withering glance that should have wilted them but did not.

"And now that that's settled and we're all pals together," said Bob, "let's get busy on these

sets. It won't do to make a flivver of our part in the fair. In fact, we want to make the radio booth the big feature. The bigger crowd we draw, the more money there'll be in the fund."

"Right you are," assented Joe. "Gee, fellows, it's like old times to be tinkering with our sets again! Do you realize that this is the first time we've got together for radio work since we got back from Horseshoe Valley?"

"That's so," put in Herb Fennington. "By the way, Bob, when have you heard from Uncle Lon? And how are things going in the valley?"

"Got a letter two or three days ago," replied Bob. "He says that the town is getting to rights about as fast as can be expected. They've cleared away most of the debris from the flooded section, and the people are beginning to rebuild. Of course, the flood did a tremendous amount of damage."

"Lucky the whole town wasn't swept away," said Joe. "Say, fellows, will you ever forget that wild ride through the valley with the flood coming after us? It makes me shiver to think of it."

"Same here!" echoed Bob. "That was one fierce night! But the most thrilling part to me was the paddling around with the raft among

the drifting and burning houses and helping to save the women and children."

"Do you remember the two girls on the top of the house that had been carried from its foundations?" asked Herb. "Gee, but that was a close shave! You remember one was just slipping off into the water and the other was losing her grip. If we'd got there one minute later, probably both would have been drowned. They told me afterward that neither of them could swim."

"I remember them," said Joe. "But I didn't get their names, or if I did, I don't recall them. It's funny that they were there alone. They had a father and mother, too."

"Probably their folks were out of town when the flood came," conjectured Jimmy. "There were a whole lot of families separated at that time. Don't you remember how frantic some of them were and how the women kept crying for their babies? That was one of the worst things about it."

"The whole thing is like a nightmare when I look back on it," observed Bob. "All the same, I'm mighty glad we were there. We seemed to be the only ones who could use the radio and call for assistance. And if help hadn't come, that dam would have gone, sure."

"Good old radio!" exclaimed Joe enthusias-

tically. "What doesn't it do? What can't it do? Floods, forest fires, earthquakes, shipwrecks—it gets in its fine work everywhere."

"Yes," admitted Bob, "it does all that. But the burning question now before the house is how I'm going to install this dandy amplifier in my Super-Fourodyne."

The name "Super-Fourodyne" was one which had been invented by Bob, for the reason that this receiving set had been put together by the four chums.

The celerity and accuracy with which he proceeded to the work, however, showed that he was pretty sure of his ground. The others gathered around him and watched with interest as, before connecting the new batteries, he removed the six UV-199 tubes from the catacomb to avoid an accidental burnout. Then he unhooked and removed the control panel from the cabinet.

"Now be careful to check your wiring," warned Joe.

Bob followed Joe's suggestion. Then he carefully replaced the control panel and inserted the UR-556 adapter in the left-hand socket, pressing it down and giving it a slight turn to the right. Following this, he pushed the two large and two small contact pins of the UX-120 into the corresponding holes of the adapter. Then he

put back five of the UV-199s, keeping one for a spare.

"How far will that affect the mechanical operation of the set?" asked Herb.

"Not very much," replied Bob. "I'll have to carry the battery setting about three dial graduations beyond the setting I was using before. That's all."

"I'll bet that will lay over anything in the radio line shown at the fair," volunteered Jimmy.

"It sure will," echoed Joe.

"Well, if it helps to bring in the plunks, it will be worth all the time and expense," remarked Bob. "The athletic fund is running pretty low. It needs a big chunk of coin. Both the football and track teams deserve support, for they've been going great guns this year."

"Everybody in town seems to be rooting for them," remarked Herb. "With two or three exceptions," he added significantly.

"Two or three exceptions?" repeated Bob, puzzled. "Oh, I know whom you mean. Buck Looker, Carl Lutz and Terence Mooney."

"They're the bright particular stars I had in mind," said Herb. "They're as sore as boils and would like nothing better than to queer the whole show."

"And everybody knows the reason," chimed in Jimmy. "It's because Looker and Lutz took

such a flop when they tried to make the football team. They were jokes when it came to playing."

"Yes," agreed Bob. "They had beef enough, but they lacked the pluck," he added. "That yellow streak in them always came out when they had to face hard opposition. Then, too, they always got kerflummexed on the signals."

"But if they were real sports, they'd shout for the team just the same," said Herb.

"Of course they would," agreed Joe. "But sportsmanship and that bunch—it is to laugh!"

"Nothing doing, for a fact," put in Jimmy. "The leper can't change his spots."

"You mean leopard," corrected Herb.

"Maybe I did," assented Jimmy indifferently. "Either name will do for those fellows."

"I did think they might be different after their experience with the flood," remarked Joe. "They had a pretty bad scare then. They'd have lost their lives if it hadn't been for us. But since they've come back they're the same old crowd. They bully all the smaller kids in school and make their lives miserable."

"Some fellow once said that the only good Indian was a dead Indian," observed Herb. "Perhaps that applies to—Hello! what's that?"

"It's a band!" exclaimed Jimmy. "And from

the noise they're making, they're trying to blow their heads off."

With one accord the four boys left their radio sets and rushed to the window.

"It's a circus, and it's coming this way!" yelled Jimmy, who had got to the window first.

Down the street a long procession was coming. In front was the band, making up by its vigor for the scarcity in numbers. Following the band came some gayly bedizened men and women riding on horses. Then came the clowns, convulsing the children in the crowd by their grotesque appearance and antics.

But what especially riveted the attention of the throng that filled the sidewalks and looked from windows was the line of wagons containing the animals of the show. The boards had been taken from the sides of most of the cages, and the beasts were clearly visible. Some of them lay motionless, gazing out stolidly at the crowd, while others paced restlessly back and forth.

"There's your leper, Jimmy," said Herb, with a grin, as he pointed to a lithe brute covered with spots.

Jimmy made a pass at him and Herb dodged.

"They're going over to Wellsville," said Bob. "I guess they're only two jumps ahead of the sheriff. Some of their stuff was seized at Elwood the other night. Those cages are pretty

dilapidated. Doesn't look as if it would take much to shake them apart."

"Let's go down to the street," cried Jimmy, seizing his cap. "We can see them better from there."

The chums rushed pell-mell down the stairs and soon secured positions in the front ranks of the onlookers.

Near the place where they were the street had been torn up for the laying of sewer pipes. This narrowed considerably the road over which the wagons had to pass.

Most of them made it easily enough, but the horses drawing the wagon that held the tigers' cage grew restive and swerved just as they reached the deepest part of the excavation. The fore wheel dropped over the edge of the ditch and the wagon capsized with a crash.

A roar of excitement from the crowd greeted the accident. A moment later came frantic shouts of terror and panic.

The tigers were loose!

CHAPTER II

CORNERED BY THE TIGER

"THE tigers are loose!" came in a hoarse shout.

The cry was caught up and repeated.

On all sides there were scenes of the wildest confusion.

The crowd scattered in mad panic.

Women grabbed their children and sought refuge in the nearest store or house. Men rushed about looking for rifles, axes, weapons of any kind. The circus employees jumped from their wagons and, seizing pitchforks, ran to the capsized wagon, hoping to drive the beasts back into their cage or at any rate cow them and keep them in the trench.

The Radio Boys, as Bob Layton, Joe Atwood, Herb Fennington, and Jimmy Plummer were called, because of their devotion to the wonderful science, had scattered with the rest. None of them had a weapon of any kind. They had never seen tigers except in their cages, and had

not the slightest desire to meet them outside of them.

Their speed was suddenly quickened by the sight of two tawny forms whose heads appeared above the edge of the excavation and were facing their way.

A long alley was near at hand, and into this the four boys rushed blindly. They had no sooner entered it, however, than they wished they had not done so, for there was, so far as they could see, no entrance from the alley into the buildings that lined it on both sides. And it terminated in a wall, far too high for them to climb.

If one of the tigers should enter the alley, it would have the four boys penned like rats in a trap.

"Look here, fellows," panted Bob, as they reached the fence at the end. "I'll bend over and you mount on my back one after the other, try to catch the top of the fence, and swarm over it."

"But how about you?" asked Joe.

"Oh, I'll take my chance," said Bob. "Perhaps you'll find a rope or something on the other side that you can pull me over with."

"Not on your life!" cried Joe, and was echoed by the others. "We all go or we all stay."

Bob looked desperately about the enclosure, and

his eyes lighted up as they caught sight of a ladder almost hidden in the grass at one side.

"The very thing!" he cried. "Here, fellows, lend a hand."

In a twinkling they had grabbed the ladder and set it up against the fence, to the top of which it nearly reached.

"Up we go!" cried Bob, assuming the lead, as he usually did in emergencies. "Jimmy first, Herb next, and then Joe. No talk now. Go ahead!"

The others would have protested, but Bob seized Jimmy and pushed him toward the ladder. Jimmy climbed it with remarkable agility, considering his size, and Herb and Joe followed.

They perched themselves on the top of the fence as Bob prepared to climb.

"Quick, Bob! Quick!" cried Joe in agonized entreaty. "For the love of Pete, quick!"

Joe had caught sight of something that froze his blood! A great striped brute had appeared at the entrance of the alley. It sniffed the air for a moment, dazed and bewildered by the strangeness of its surroundings.

Then it caught sight of the boys. A wicked light came into its eyes, a menacing growl from its throat as it bounded toward them.

Bob's foot had been on the lower rung of the ladder when Joe's cry rang out. Bob knew what

it meant without looking back. For a moment he felt as though he were paralyzed.

Then with frenzied haste he began to climb.

And while he is mounting the ladder, expecting every moment to feel the grip of those terrible jaws, it may be well, for the benefit of those who have not read the preceding volumes of this series to tell who the Radio Boys were and what had been their adventures up to the time this story opens.

All of them had been born and brought up in Clintonia, a prosperous wide-awake town, with a population of about ten thousand. The town was on the banks of the Shagary River and within a hundred miles of New York City.

Bob Layton, tall, of dark complexion, about sixteen years old, was the son of a prosperous druggist and chemist of the town, a man highly respected and a leader in civic affairs. The fact that Bob was an only child had not spoiled him, and he had grown to be a popular and likable lad, frank, merry, straightforward, a leader in baseball, football and other outdoor sports. He was courageous though not foolhardy, and though he never looked for trouble he never refused to face it when it came.

His closest chum was Joe Atwood, whose father was one of the leading physicians of the town. Joe was fair and was about the same size

and build as Bob Layton. He was much more impulsive than his chum, and Bob's cooler head had often been of service in saving Joe from the results of scrapes into which he had been plunged by his quick temper. The two formed an admirable team and were seldom to be found far apart.

Closely associated with Bob and Joe were Herb Fennington and Jimmy Plummer, who were a year or so younger. Herb's father kept the largest department store in the town. Herb was jolly and likable, but he and work were not on speaking terms. If work ever caught Herb, it was because Herb had been careless and failed to see work first. When he labored at all of his own free will it was in thinking up jokes and conundrums to spring on his friends.

Jimmy's father was a carpenter and contractor. Jimmy was fat, and although not quite as lazy as Herb, ran him a close second. His appetite was notorious, and he went by the nickname of "Doughnuts," a name he tried to live up to by devouring as many of those toothsome dainties as his mother could be persuaded to give him.

A warm friendship existed between the four boys, and this had been strengthened by their common interest in radio. The wonders of that marvelous science had gripped them. They had been among the first in Clintonia to sense its pos-

sibilities, and its fascination had grown on them day by day until it had become so absorbing that they had been dubbed the "Radio Boys." Most of their spare time was spent in constructing sets, constantly improving them, taking advantage of every new discovery or improvement and reading everything about radio they could lay their hands on.

In this they had been helped very greatly by the suggestions and cooperation of Dr. Amory Dale, the pastor of the Old First Church of Clintonia. He was an eloquent preacher, and, more than that, he had a profound interest in the youth of the community, who looked up to him almost as to an elder brother. He was well versed in radio, a regular "fan" on the subject, and his advice and knowledge had been an enormous help to the boys, who felt free to consult him whenever they ran up against some puzzling wireless problem.

While Bob and his mates were popular with all the better element among the young people of the town, they had trouble at times with a certain rough element, prominent among whom were Buck Looker, Carl Lutz and Terence Mooney.

Buck was the leader of the gang, and mapped out their low schemes and dirty tricks. He was a big, hulking fellow, mean, sullen, and the bully of the high school. Lutz was his chief lieuten-

ant, and Mooney, who was the youngest of the three, was a little sneak who fawned upon Buck because Mr. Looker was one of the richest men in Clintonia, and Buck always had plenty of spending money.

The activities of this crowd had brought them often in conflict with the Radio Boys, whom they hated because they could not bulldoze them.

How the Radio Boys entered and won in a competition for the best home-made sets; how in the course of their work a queer combination of circumstances enabled them to track down a rascal who had defrauded an orphan girl; what adventures they met and what obstacles they overcame are told in the first volume of this series, entitled: "The Radio Boys' First Wireless; Or, Winning the Ferberton Prize."

Other volumes tell of further experiences in the inexhaustible field of radio. At the seashore they were involved in a series of exciting happenings, including the saving of a vessel that had sent out SOS signals, and the jailing of a scoundrel.

Later on, they were instrumental in rescuing the occupants of an upset boat, thwarting the plans of a gang of sharpers and securing the return to jail of desperate escaped convicts. Their ability led to their being placed on the program of a broadcasting station, where they

scored a decided hit. While on a vacation they served for a while with the Forest Rangers and were themselves trapped in a terrible conflagration, from which they barely escaped with their lives.

Still later their ship was sunk in a collision and they were picked up by a vessel of the Iceberg Patrol, which led to a series of exciting adventures among the icebergs that stud the ocean lanes.

A short time before this story opens they had visited Horseshoe Valley, which, during their stay, became the victim of an awful flood. How they bore themselves in this emergency, what perils they encountered, what rescues they effected in the flooded area, and how their knowledge of radio brought help to the stricken locality, are told in the preceding volume of this series, entitled: "The Radio Boys With the Flood Fighters; or, Saving the City in the Valley."

Now to return to Bob as he climbs the ladder, expecting at every moment to become the prey of the tiger bounding toward him.

It seemed to him as though he were in a nightmare, as though each foot weighed a ton as he placed it upon each succeeding rung.

But this was purely mental. As a matter of fact, he was going up the ladder with marvelous swiftness.

He reached the top and leaped to the fence. As he did so he threw the ladder backward.

At the same moment there was a terrific roar and the tiger leaped for the fence. But he was caught by the falling ladder and borne to the ground, spitting and snarling.

The Radio Boys did not wait to see the outcome. Like a flash, they dropped down on the other side of the fence and made for the nearest refuge.

This happened to be an empty house that had on it a "To Let" sign.

There was a tremendous crash behind them as the tiger hurled itself against the fence. It had evidently leaped for the top and missed.

"In here!" cried Bob, as he turned the knob of the door and found to his infinite relief that it yielded.

The chums rushed in headlong, and Bob shut the door and secured it with a bolt. Then, to make assurance doubly sure, he ran down to the cellar and secured a heavy joist that he propped up against the door.

Only then did the boys dare draw a free breath. They were flushed, exhausted, and dripping with perspiration.

Twice more there came that heavy crash against the fence.

"Do you think he can jump over it?" panted Jimmy.

"I hardly think so," replied Bob. "I guess it's too high even for him. Gee, that was a close shave!"

"Especially for you," said Joe. "I won't suffer any more when I'm dying than I did when I saw that brute making for you."

A rifle cracked, followed by a roar of rage and pain. Two more shots rang out. Then there was the sound of excited voices and the footsteps of many men coming nearer the fence.

"They've got him!" cried Herb exultantly.

"I guess so," assented Joe. "But there were two of them in that cage. I wonder what's become of the other one."

"I'm not so curious that I want to go out and see," remarked Jimmy. "I've had all the tiger I want for one day."

"Same here," echoed Herb.

Just then there came a wild scream from the upper part of the house, a scream of terror.

"Help! Help!"

CHAPTER III

IN THE NICK OF TIME

THE Radio Boys sprang to their feet, faces as pale as ashes.

In the present juncture of affairs that startling cry could mean only one thing.

The other tiger!

A moment later their fears were confirmed, when, mingled with the screams, they heard a series of growls and snarls and the plungings about of a heavy body.

"Oh if we only had some guns!" groaned Bob.

"Listen, fellows!" cried Joe. "My home's only a few doors away. My father has a heavy magazine rifle. I'll go and get it and be back in a jiffy."

He was off at once, and in an incredibly short space of time was back with the weapon.

"Now, fellows," he panted, "We've got to help that fellow, whoever he is. I've got the only gun, and there's no use you boys going with me."

"We stick together," answered Bob, and Herb and Jimmy nodded agreement. "While you were gone we got some things from the cellar."

A hasty search had revealed a rusty axe and some heavy billets of wood that could be used as clubs. These his chums now showed to Joe. Bob seized the axe, Herb and Jimmy armed themselves with the clubs, and then, with Joe leading the way, the Radio Boys stealthily crept up the stairs, their hearts beating like triphammers. There had as yet been enacted no tragedy, as the sounds still coming from above told the boys.

On the upper floor was a corridor with bedrooms opening from it on either side. At the end of the corridor was an unceiled and unplastered space used as a storeroom. It was from this that the shrieks, the growls and the scuffling proceeded.

The door, that had been pushed nearly shut by the bounding about of the growling occupant, had a pane of glass at about two thirds of its height. Through this the boys peered fearfully.

The sight that met their eyes was well calculated to strike terror to the stoutest heart.

The back part of the room was stored with heavy, cumbrous furniture, sofas, bureaus, bed springs, that had not yet been removed by the latest resident of the house. These were piled up

on each other so as to form an almost inextricable mass.

Over this and into this the fugitive had plunged, and was hiding somewhere in it, as the cries that came from it revealed. The boys saw no human figure. But they had no trouble in seeing the terror of the jungle.

Before the mass the tiger raged, growling and spitting, tearing at the objects that intervened between it and its intended prey.

Joe raised his rifle and took aim through the glass. Bob took position at one side of the door with axe uplifted. Herb and Jimmy stood ready with their clubs.

"Now, Joe!" cried Bob. "Let him have it."

Bang!

The crash of splintered glass was followed by a howl of surprise and rage which showed that the bullet had found its target. But it had not reached a vital point. The great beast dropped to the floor, but was up again in a moment and turned to face its assailants.

Joe fired again, and the bullet found lodgment in the creature's flank. But it was not crippled and made a dash for the door, which was still ajar.

As its great head appeared in the opening Bob's axe came down with crushing force. The beast

keeled over, stunned. Joe's rifle spoke once more, and the bullet caught the tiger straight between the eyes. The great body quivered for a moment, then straightened out and lay still.

Bob was the first to recover himself.

"Now to get the man out!" he exclaimed, as he stepped into the room.

"Hello, there!" he called. "You can come out now. The tiger's dead."

"Are you sure?" asked a quavering voice.

"Dead sure," put in Herb, who even at that moment could not refrain from perpetrating a pun.

A tousled head worked its way up from a mass of rugs and bedclothes, and the boys gave a start as they recognized the face.

"Buck Looker!" they cried in chorus.

It was indeed their arch-enemy, but at the moment a very meek and subdued bully, his pasty face white with fear, his little eyes strained with the horror he had undergone. He was so weak that he could not climb out unaided, and the Radio Boys set to work to help him, throwing the furniture aside until they had a clear path through which to drag him to the front of the room.

He cowered and moaned as he caught sight of the dead tiger.

"It's all right, Buck," said Bob kindly. "I don't wonder that you're all in, for you've cer-

tainly had a tough experience. But this tiger won't bother anybody again."

By this time the sound of the shots had attracted attention from the outside, and men with weapons began crowding in. Foremost among them were Dr. Dale, Mr. Layton and Dr. Atwood.

They gazed in wonder at the dead tiger and then with admiration at the boys.

"Do you mean that you boys accounted for the tiger all by yourselves?" asked Dr. Dale.

"Oh, it wasn't so hard," replied Joe modestly. "Bob soaked him with the axe and I plugged him with the rifle. Herb and Jimmy stood ready with clubs. Between us we finished him."

There was an outburst of cheers and applause from the crowd.

"How did the brute come to get you cornered here," asked Mr. Layton, throwing his arm over Bob's shoulder.

"He didn't exactly get us cornered," replied Bob. "The shoe was on the other foot. We got him cornered. The tiger had chased Buck into the storeroom and was trying to get at him. We happened to be downstairs at the time, after the other tiger had chased us through the alley. We heard the rumpus up here and guessed what was happening. Joe ran home and got his rifle and

the rest of us picked up whatever was handy. That's about all."

"That's about all!" mimicked Dr. Dale. "It seems to me that's quite enough. You boys didn't have to mix up with this at all. You could have easily gotten out of the house and saved your skins. Yet of your own accord you came up here and risked your lives to save the life of another. Boys, I'm proud of you. The whole town will be proud of you when it knows the facts."

The Radio Boys flushed and looked embarrassed.

"How about the other tiger?" asked Bob, to change the subject. "We heard shots and supposed you had got him."

"He's done for, all right," put in Dr. Atwood. "They shot him as he was trying to leap a fence. This has surely been a day that Clintonia will long remember."

"It sure will," laughed Bob. "I hope no other wagon went into the ditch."

"One more did go over," said Dr. Dale. "But I believe it had only small and harmless animals in it. All the dangerous beasts are accounted for. The elephants got a little fractious and excited, but they've got them now under control. You'll have a lot of patients to be treated for nervous troubles in the next few days, Doctor," he added, turning with a genial smile to Dr. Atwood.

"I think likely," agreed Dr. Atwood. "For that matter, I think I have one right here now in the person of Buck. He's had a terrible experience."

Buck was indeed trembling as though with the palsy. As soon as possible Dr. Atwood administered a tonic, and then led the boy downstairs and took him home in his own car.

As the story of the fight with the tiger spread like wildfire, people came thronging into the house to see the dead brute, and the congratulations showered on the Radio Boys grew so embarrassing that the latter finally pressed through the throng and got to the street.

Even here they could not escape, for the reporters of the town newspapers tackled them and made them tell and retell the story in its minutest details. For once the reporters had a tale that needed no embroidering to make it thrilling.

"Let's duck," murmured Bob to Joe at last.

"Nothing suit me better," returned Joe. "Here goes for a swift sneak—Hello! what's the matter over there?"

A crowd was gathering about a barber shop up the street and a chorus of excited ejaculations rent the air.

CHAPTER IV

A WILD CHASE

"SOMETHING'S up!" cried Jimmy, starting for the scene on a run.

"Perhaps your leper's on the rampage," chuckled Herb, as he followed.

"Oh, let up on that leper," muttered Jimmy.

"Nothing like that," put in Bob, as he and Joe overtook the others. "They'd be running away from the shop instead of toward it if there were any danger. And they seem to be laughing."

It was indeed a hilarious crowd into which the boys forced their way. The reason for the laughter was not far to seek.

Jake Shemm's barber shop was a scene of wild confusion. Shaving mugs and bottles of hair tonic littered the floor. A man who had been getting a hair cut, and whom the boys recognized as the father of Carl Lutz, had slipped from the chair and was trying vainly to get under it. The girl manicurist was huddled in a corner behind

her table, which had been upset, and was shielding her hair with her hands while she sent up shriek after shriek.

Jake himself and two of his men were chasing a monkey about the shop and trying to drive it into the street, but the agile beast easily eluded their frantic lunges, leaping from chair to chair, from shelf to shelf, and defying all their efforts.

Another monkey had seized a hair brush and perched itself on the top of a tier of shelves, where it sat chattering encouragement to its comrade.

As Jake in his chase came directly under him, the monkey threw the brush and hit the rotund proprietor of the shop on his bald head. Jake emitted a howl of rage, and danced about rubbing his head, while the spectators outside were convulsed with merriment.

The Radio Boys laughed with the rest, but they felt that the joke had now gone far enough, and they entered into the fray and finally helped Jake chase the monkeys from the shop.

The crowd scattered, as the monkeys scampered through the door and down the street.

"Where'll they go next, I wonder," panted Herb, as he and his comrades joined the crowd following in the monkey's path.

"That's easy to answer," returned Joe. "They're going right into your father's store."

"One of those brutes has one of Jake's razors with him!" exclaimed Bob, a note of alarm coming into his voice.

Into the Fennington department store the monkeys leaped, creating an alarm among the customers and clerks that equaled that created in the barber shop.

But the humorous element was lacking here, for the monkey with the razor now had the weapon swinging open, and in his wild gyrations came perilously near wounding several of those in the store.

The Radio Boys had thought to pick up some implements, such as spades and rakes when passing a hardware store, and armed with these they, together with others, speedily routed the invaders. A well directed blow by Bob sent the razor spinning from the monkey's paw, and Joe picked up the weapon, closed it, and put it in his pocket.

The battle was spirited but brief, and the monkeys scurried through the doorway and dashed into Talley's catering establishment next door.

There one of them plumped into a tray of custard pies, while the other devoted its attention to cream puffs and chocolate eclairs, which it devoured with gusto.

It was a much bespattered pair of monkeys that

finally emerged from the store in the arms of circus attendants, who at last had come to the rescue of the demoralized merchants.

It had been a lively time while it lasted, and the grief of the smaller boys was great because it had not lasted longer. As for the Radio Boys, when it was all over, they sat down and laughed until the tears came.

"Here comes a reporter," remarked Bob. "Let's fade. I've had enough of those ginks for one day."

The boys "faded" accordingly. But they did not find it easy to avoid the penalties of fame. The newspapers, which did not often have such a chance, made the most of it and spread themselves in long stories with screaming headlines. Wherever the Radio Boys went they were stopped and congratulated by the citizens of the town. Their own families, of course, were bursting with pride.

Nor was the fame of the boys' exploit confined to their own township. The city papers took the matter up, sent their photographers and published their pictures in the rotogravure sections of the Sunday sheets.

It would be foolish to say that the Radio Boys did not derive some satisfaction from this. But after a time it palled on them, and their faces took on a hunted look.

"I wish I'd never seen a tiger," grumbled Bob.

"Same here," echoed Joe. "I find myself sneaking down side streets as though I were a crook. Enough is plenty. I'm getting good and tired of it."

"Besides, it's taking up so much of our time that we'll have all we can do to get ready for the fair in time," bemoaned Bob.

"There's one good thing about it, though," put in Herb. "It will boost our booth at the fair like all possessed. Look here, fellows. I've got an idea!"

"The first he ever had," murmured Jimmy.

"Let's get that tiger's head stuffed and mounted over the booth," went on Herb, ignoring the gibe. "It will pull like wildfire."

"Nothing doing," returned Bob, shaking his head decidedly. "It would seem like boasting."

"I guess it would, at that," assented Herb, though with a little disappointment. "I wasn't thinking of it in that way. I was only thinking of drawing customers to the booth."

"They'll come fast enough," predicted Joe confidently. "All I'm worried about is the weather. It's been so good lately that it's about due to break."

"By the way, has Buck Looker thanked any one of you fellows yet?" asked Herb.

"Not me," was the chorused answer.

"I got a letter of thanks from Mr. Looker," added Bob. "I suppose you all did." They nodded their heads. "But Buck, although I've met him several times at school and in the street, hasn't said a word."

"Wouldn't that get your goat?" asked Jimmy disgustedly.

"Do a man a favor and he'll never forgive you," quoted Herb.

"Buck is Buck, and that's all there is to it," observed Bob. "He simply can't do the right thing in the right way. He'll probably feel sore at us all his life. But I don't think that after this he'll try to put over any more of his dirty tricks on us."

"Maybe you've a more generous nature than I have," remarked Joe. "But I'll say you have another guess coming, if you ask me. As Jimmy so truly said, the leper can't change his spots. I've seen Buck and Lutz and Mooney talking together in whispers several times in the last few days, and I'll bet they're cooking up something. I know the signs."

"Oh, well, let them, then," returned Bob. "We've beaten them before and we'll beat them again."

The fair was to last during three successive nights with one afternoon session. It was to be

held in one of the town's clubrooms that took in all the upper floor of a two-story building underneath which were several stores.

On the day before the fair was to open the clubroom presented a busy scene. The last touches were being given to the various booths, and there was a good deal of friendly rivalry between the young people as to whose booth would be the most attractive. There were booths for candies, for cakes, for soda water and ice-cream, for curios, for toys, for fortune telling, and all the customary adjuncts of a fair.

The Radio Boys were working like beavers at their own booth, installing their radio sets and laying out the wares for which they hoped to draw a host of customers. So engrossed were they, and so much did they have to do, that night drew on before they knew it. The other workers had gradually dropped away for supper and they were left alone.

They were happy and elated as the work took shape under their hands. The only thing that bothered them was the state of the weather, that might result in a diminished attendance. Black clouds covered the sky, and although it had not yet rained, the outlook for the morrow was ominous.

For some time past the boys had been conscious of sounds directly over their heads.

"Must be rats up there in the rafters," remarked Joe carelessly.

"Sounds like it," agreed Bob. "Scampering around I suppose to get——"

"Listen!" interrupted Herb, holding up his hand.

All suspended work, and in the silence that followed they could hear what sounded like stealthy footsteps on the roof.

"Two-legged rats!" pronounced Bob grimly. "Come along, fellows. Don't make a noise. Follow me to the skylight."

On tiptoe the boys climbed up the narrow stairs that led to the glass covered aperture in the roof.

Noiselessly, Bob lifted the glass and its frame an inch or two and laid it to one side. As silently as shadows the boys thrust their heads through the opening.

There on the roof, which was flat in some parts and sloping in others, ripping away the shingles directly above the radio booth, were Buck Looker, Carl Lutz, and Terence Mooney!

CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE ON THE ROOF

THE Radio Boys had been so noiseless in their movements that Buck and his cronies had no intimation of their presence. The backs of the intruders were toward the skylight, and they were talking in low tones among themselves.

Joe made a move to spring on the roof, but Bob laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"Just a minute, Joe," he whispered. "We've got them dead to rights, anyway. We can guess what they're doing it for, but it will make it easier if we let them give themselves away."

In the dead silence that the Radio Boys maintained, the voices came to them distinctly.

"I guess this will queer their game all right," muttered Buck, as he ripped off another shingle.

"Are you sure this is right above their booth?" asked Terence Mooney.

"Dead sure," put in Carl Lutz. "I figured it out when I was in the clubroom yesterday while the carpenters were working. Don't you worry

about that. All I'm worrying about is that it may not rain hard."

"It would be tough to have all our work for nothing," grumbled Buck. "Gee, can't you see those boobs dancing around with the rain dripping all over them and their sets and the decorations of their booth? When I think of it I could laugh my head off."

"Suppose you laugh it off before I knock it off!" cried Bob, leaping to the roof with Joe, Herb, and Jimmy close at his heels.

There were cries of consternation from the rascals as they turned at the sudden irruption.

"Laugh this off!" shouted Bob as his fist shot out and caught Buck square between the eyes, sending him staggering against the chimney.

"And this!" echoed Joe, as he handed Lutz a swift one on the chin.

The miscreants staggered back, their hands at their faces. Mooney whimpered and made a dive for the skylight, but Herb and Jimmy intercepted him.

"Don't hit him," called out Bob. "He's too small. But don't let him get away. Now, Buck," he added, "come on and get your licking."

Buck's eyes were red with rage, but he was not at all anxious to accept the invitation, though he was quite as tall and considerably heavier than Bob.

"Aw, you've got your gang with you," he growled. "Four against three."

"Two against two," corrected Bob. "Come along, you coward. Have I got to slap your face to make you fight?"

There was no way out, and with a bellow of rage Buck lowered his head and plunged into his adversary.

Bob met him with a blow that sent his head back with a jerk. Joe in the meantime had engaged with Lutz, and for a few minutes the fighting was fast and furious.

The roof was surrounded by a small balustrade, and toward this the combatants gradually moved. The railing was old and not too strong, and a fall from the top of the two-story building might prove fatal, especially as the building abutted on an alley where the ground was strewn with rocks.

A well-directed blow, with all Bob's muscle behind it, sent Buck down on the flat part of the roof, where he lay half sobbing with pain and rage.

"Get up," commanded Bob.

But Buck made no move.

"Have you had enough?" asked Bob.

"I—I've had enough," muttered Buck.

Lutz had put up a stiffer resistance, but Joe was steadily driving him backward. At the mo-

ment that victory had declared for Bob, Joe lashed out a left hander that sent Lutz hurtling against the rail. There was a crash as the balustrade gave way.

Quick as a flash, Bob leaped forward and grabbed Lutz just as he was toppling on the edge of the roof. Joe helped him, and together they dragged Lutz back to safety.

All the fight was out of Carl, and he stood alongside of Buck, both of them bruised and panting.

"A pretty pair you are!" exclaimed Bob contemptuously, as he looked at them. "I leave out Mooney, for everybody knows he does what you tell him to do."

"We knew you were yellow," put in Joe. "But for you, Buck Looker, to do this after what we did for you the other day—well, you're cheaper than dirt."

Neither of the rascals uttered a word. They had been caught red-handed, and no excuse was possible.

"Herb!" directed Bob. "Leave Mooney to Jimmy and go down and get three hammers and some nails. You'll find plenty scattered around that have been left by the carpenters."

Herb was off with the word, and in a short time returned with the implements.

"Now, you fellows, get down there and replace

those shingles," ordered Bob. "See that you make a good job of it, too. Perhaps it won't be so much fun putting them down as it was ripping them off."

Buck started to blurt out a surly refusal, but there was a glint in Bob's eye that made him think better of it, and the three cronies set to work, their eyes glowering with rage and their faces shamed and sheepish.

Only when convinced that the work was thoroughly done did Bob and Joe relax their guard over their foes.

"Now get up and get away from here," commanded Bob curtly. "And you can thank your stars that you're getting off so easily. If we told the owner of the building about this he could have you arrested for malicious mischief. But we can settle our own private quarrels without calling in the police. Now beat it while the going's good."

The discomfited trio slunk away to the skylight and climbed down the stairs.

"We'll get even with you fellows yet," snarled Buck, as he disappeared through the opening.

The Radio Boys followed, but when they reached the clubroom floor found that their enemies had vanished.

"Guess they find some other neighborhood a good deal pleasanter than this," grinned Herb.

"Things don't seem half as funny to them as they did a half hour ago," chuckled Jimmy.

"Didn't I tell you those fellows were hopeless?" asked Joe. "And all this after we'd risked our lives to save Buck!"

"Killed a tiger to save a skunk," put in Herb.

"Well, the main thing is that we've queered their game," remarked Bob, with deep satisfaction. "It was a great joke, but we had the last laugh."

The fair opened the next night under the most favorable circumstances. The threatened storm had blown over and the weather was all that could be desired. The attendance was large, for the whole town was proud of the record that had been hung up by the high school teams and nearly every one was glad to help the fund along.

All the booths were well patronized, but that of the Radio Boys proved the center of attraction. The four boys had outdone themselves in the decorations and exhibits. The booth was gayly bedecked with flags and colored lights, and their radio sets were polished and shining to the highest degree.

The loud-speakers had been removed and ear-phones were used in their stead. The sets were tuned in on different stations that had been carefully selected for the excellence of their programs. For a nickel, any one could listen in

during the performance of a number and the clearness and power of the reception spoke volumes for the qualities of the receiving sets.

Jimmy and Herb took turns as "barker" for the show, and, as they had plenty of jokes and gags and a convulsingly funny line of patter, they kept the crowd in a high state of hilarity. They brought in plenty of customers, and the coins kept dropping into the till with a steady tinkle that was music to the ears of the boys.

In addition to the entertainment, the Radio Boys had a large stock of goods for sale, such as radio books and magazines and various parts of sets. Many of these had been contributed by merchants of the town, and a number had come as gifts from firms in New York who had heard of the episode of the tiger.

"Of course, all the money that comes in from the sale of these will be velvet and even on the things we've had to buy we'll have a good margin of profit," Jimmy had remarked just before the doors opened at the commencement of the fair.

The success of the first night was duplicated and even exceeded on the two succeeding nights and at the one matinee. Again there was no doubt as to which booth was the greatest drawing card. Although there was no tiger's head over the booth, as Herb had suggested, the recollection of the boys' exploit was still keen in the

mind of their fellow townsmen, and many of the latter brought out-of-town visitors to the show just to let them see the boys, who, in the language of one enthusiastic reporter, had "put Clintonia on the map."

But to this, Jimmy had taken indignant exception.

"Hum! as if Clintonia wasn't already on the map!" he snapped, in so far as Jimmy could snap, to his chums.

Neither Buck Looker nor any of his gang were present at any of the entertainments. The story of that episode on the roof had become common property, and indignation among the boys and girls of the high school was so intense that for a time the rascals thought it would be just as well to keep out of sight.

The Radio Boys had set their mark of receipts from their booth at a hundred dollars of clear profit. But on the last night of the fair it seemed that they were destined to fall somewhat short of that figure.

"We've got to get that hundred somehow, fellows!" declared Bob, with determination. "Wake up, you barkers, and draw the crowd."

"I've told all my best jokes," said Herb.

"Think up some others," commanded Bob implacably.

"I'm as hoarse as a crow," complained Jimmy.

"Keep on croaking then," adjured Bob. "We've got to have that hundred!"

"So Herb and Jimmy did their best, and their best was so good that it tied their hearers up in knots. And in the intervals Bob and Joe lifted up their dulcet voices in a siren song, retailing the excellence of their wares and trying to draw dollars from pockets that were already depleted from purchases made on the preceding nights," one of Herb's sisters carefully explained to her father the next day.

Meanwhile, on that last night, the boys reached the eighty dollar mark and passed it. A little later they had crept up to eighty-five. But by that time the peak of the evening was past and the audience was beginning to thin out. That extra fifteen dollars seemed to be out of the question.

"I never realized before how many nickels and dimes it took to make a hundred dollars," sighed Bob.

"Never mind," consoled Joe, "we're away ahead of all the others, anyway. No other booth has taken in as much as seventy-five."

Now they were counting the half dollars. Eighty-five, fifty! Eighty-six! Eighty-six, fifty! There it hung for a while, and then crept up to eighty-seven.

"Oh, you thirteen dollars, come to papa!" moaned Jimmy.

"Nothing doing," grunted Herb disconsolately. "Thirteen's an unlucky number, anyway."

Only a few people were now left in the building, and most of the other booths had discontinued business.

For some minutes a man had been standing in front of the radio booth, keenly observing the boys. He was of medium height, well dressed, and had a genial, friendly face. None of the Radio Boys had ever seen him before.

"He looks as though he had money," whispered Joe to Bob. "See if you can sell him anything."

"Anything I can do for you, sir?" asked Bob, summoning up his best salesman's smile.

"Well, yes, I guess you can," replied the stranger, drawing a roll of money from his pocket and stripping a bill from it. "You can take this twenty dollars!"

CHAPTER VI

GOOD LUCK

THERE was a startled gasp from the Radio Boys as they looked wonderingly at one another and the stranger.

"I—I don't exactly understand," stammered Bob. "Just what is it you want to buy with this?"

"Nothing at all," replied the newcomer, with a genial smile. "That is a thank-offering to you boys for saving my Nellie and Rose."

The boys were more bewildered than ever and showed it in their faces.

"It's this way," explained the stranger, with his smile growing broader. "My name is Henry Fordice, and I come from Bottville. Now perhaps you begin to understand."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob, a light breaking over him. "The place where the big flood was. But I don't remember any one named Nellie or Rose."

"You saved so many that I don't wonder you forget some of them," returned Mr. Fordice.

"Do you remember two girls, twins they are, that you boys rescued from the top of a floating house just as they were slipping into the water?"

"Sure we do," put in Joe. "We didn't know their names, but we were talking about them just the other day."

"They were my girls, Rose and Nellie," returned Mr. Fordice. "Their mother and I were out of town at the time. We were nearly frantic until we had a wire telling us that they were safe. They haven't stopped talking since of how brave and kind and gentle you boys were to them."

"Oh, we only did what any one else would have done under the same circumstances," replied Bob, deprecatingly.

"Lots of people would have thought only of saving their own skins," declared Mr. Fordice warmly. "You did me a service that I shall never forget. I learned your names from your Uncle Lon," he added, addressing himself to Bob, "and I have come to Clintonia to thank you in person."

Here he shook hands heartily with all the boys, and they returned the hand clasp cordially.

"But about this twenty—" observed Bob, a little perplexed.

"Just a trifle that I should like to have you boys use to buy some little things for yourselves, if you will," said Mr. Fordice.

"That's mighty nice of you," remarked Bob. "But we couldn't take anything for doing an act of common humanity."

"Well, then," replied Mr. Fordice, "add it to your fund for the fair. I heard you," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "bemoaning the fact that you were a few dollars short of the hundred you had hoped to raise. Perhaps this will help you to reach the mark."

"That will be great!" beamed Bob. "Thanks ever so much!"

"Weeping weasels!" cried Jimmy. "Who said we wouldn't get that hundred?"

"With seven dollars over!" exulted Joe.

"We'll lay all over every other booth at the fair," rejoiced Herb.

Mr. Fordice smiled.

"I'm mighty glad if I've been able to add something to your pleasure," he remarked. "But it's nothing at all compared with the debt I owe to you."

During the last part of the conversation Mr. and Mrs. Layton had approached the booth and had become interested listeners.

Bob introduced them to Mr. Fordice, and their interest deepened when they learned that he was a friend and neighbor of Mrs. Layton's Uncle Lon Owens.

"Any friend of his is a friend of ours," said

Mr. Layton genially. "Where are you putting up?"

"I just got in town a little while ago and came straight here from the station," replied Mr. Fordice. "I intend to stay at the Sterling House overnight. To-morrow I am going to New York on business."

"Come right home with us," urged Mr. Layton, and his wife seconded him with such cordiality that, after a few objections for fear he would trouble them, the gentleman from Bottville accepted the invitation.

The older people stood about chatting for a few minutes while the Radio Boys finished their work and put everything in order at the booth, and then the whole party adjourned to the Layton home. Joe, Herb and Jimmy started to say good-night, but Mrs. Layton insisted that they come in and partake of a lunch she was going to prepare.

At the word "lunch" Jimmy surrendered instantly and enthusiastically, and the others were scarcely less eager to accept the invitation.

That midnight "snack" was a very pleasant occasion. The atmosphere of the Layton home was such as to put a visitor completely at his ease. Mr. Fordice proved to be a genial and entertaining talker, and though what he said about the work of the Radio Boys at the time of the flood caused them at times to flush with embarrass-

ment, it gave immense pride and pleasure to his hosts.

In the course of the conversation it developed that Mr. Fordice, after the conclusion of his business in New York, was going to look over a piece of property of his some distance down the Atlantic coast.

"It's called Signal Island," he explained. "It got that name, according to an old yarn, from its having been used by pirates to signal to their mates ashore."

The boys pricked up their ears at once.

"Did you say pirates?" asked Jimmy.

"That's the way the story goes," laughed Mr. Fordice. "Of course, I don't know how much truth there may be in it, though there are certain things that seem to confirm it."

The boys looked at each other with the love of adventure showing in their eyes.

"But that is all in the past," went on Mr. Fordice. "Of course there are no pirates nowadays. But there are lots of people who still have the old pirate spirit and—"

He broke off abruptly, as though he were on the brink of saying something that he had not intended to disclose.

"The place has been in our family for generations," he continued. "It was owned by my great-great-grandfather. In his day there really

were pirates, and there was a rumor of his burying money to keep it from them, and—"

Again he checked himself.

"I seem to have pirates on the brain," he said laughingly. "I've had opportunities from time to time to sell the island, but I've never been able to make up my mind to do it. I suppose it's a matter of sentiment. My grandparents are buried there, and I don't like to have the place go out of the family."

"It ought to be a mighty good place to spend vacations in," put in Joe. "There ought to be lots of things to do, boating, fishing, and swimming."

"It is a romantic spot," admitted Mr. Fordice. "If I had any boys in my family, I suppose they'd go crazy over it. They'd have the place all to themselves and could do what they liked. It would be a regular Robinson Crusoe kind of life. I think it is a little rough for girls, and Nellie and Rose really don't care much for it."

"Gee, I wish my dad owned a place like that!" sighed Herb.

"You boys would be just as free of it as though you owned it," returned Mr. Fordice. "By the way," he continued, as he looked around at the group of interested young faces, "why couldn't you come down now with me and spend a few

weeks there? I'd be delighted to have you do it, and I could promise you a dandy time."

There was a chorus of enraptured exclamations at the prospect.

Bob looked eagerly and imploringly at his father.

"It's very kind of you to give the invitation," said Mr. Layton, "and if it were vacation time, I'd have no objections to Bob's going. Likely enough the parents of the other boys would agree. But I don't like the idea of breaking into their school work."

"Listen, Dad!" exclaimed Bob. "The building inspector was at the school the other day, and I heard him telling Mr. Preston that there had been serious defects in the repairs to the building that had been made after the fire. He as much as said that he feared the building was unsafe and that school would have to be suspended for several weeks while it was being put in proper condition."

"I'm sorry to hear that," replied Mr. Layton thoughtfully.

"So am I—not," murmured Jimmy in an undertone.

"If that should turn out to be so, you'd have no objections to Bob's going to Signal Island, would you, Mr. Layton?" pursued Mr. Fordice.

"Not at all, replied Bob's father. "He and the

other boys here did such good work in the matter of the tiger that I think they deserve a reward."

"I hope the parents of the other boys will feel the same way," smiled Mr. Fordice. "As for me, I should be simply delighted. It would be good to see some life about the old place, and I'm sure the boys would enjoy it. It would be an experience out of the ordinary. They could take one or more of their radio sets along and keep in touch with the home folks all the time."

"That would be a great comfort to us and to the parents of the other boys, I'm sure," said Mrs. Layton. "In fact, I suppose it would be almost the only way they could get into communication with us."

"The quickest way, undoubtedly," replied Mr. Fordice, "but not the only way. A boat comes from the mainland on signal and takes letters or telegraph messages. But I suppose," he added with a smile, "that the boys are such rabid radio fans that they'd scorn any other method."

"Not quite so bad as that," put in Bob. "But of course on general principles we'd prefer the radio. But how could we do any sending from there? Where could we get the juice?"

"The juice?" repeated Mr. Fordice, in a puzzled tone.

Bob laughed.

"That's our slang for the electric current to feed our batteries with," he explained.

"Oh, I see," replied their guest. "Where do you get it here?"

"From the electric light station," returned Bob. "We connect our batteries and get all the current we want. But I don't suppose you have any dynamo on the island."

"Not exactly," laughed Mr. Fordice. "But we do have electric lights. There was a section of an abandoned cable from the mainland across the island to the other shore of the cove, and I got the electric company that supplies Rock Point to make connection so that I could get the light. So you'll be all right as far as sending is concerned."

"That's bully!" exclaimed Joe.

"I suppose you're licensed operators?" said Mr. Fordice.

"Every one of us," replied Joe. "Bob, especially, is a dabster at sending," he added proudly.

"You can take your sending set, Joe, and I'll take my receiving set," said Bob. "That will fit us out to the queen's taste."

The boys were enraptured at the prospect of this visit. The reference to pirates and all the possibilities of romance and excitement that the word suggested had stirred them deeply.

When at last the party broke up, Bob accompanied his friends out to the gate.

"Bring all your batteries to bear on your folks," he counseled. "It wouldn't be any fun if one of us were left out."

"Trust us for that," answered Joe.

"If only the school building is on the fritz!" murmured Jimmy prayerfully.

"Jimmy, I'm ashamed of you," rebuked Herb virtuously. "You ought to be heartbroken at the thought of having to give up your studies."

"I am," replied Jimmy. "But I've learned how to smile even when my heart is breaking."

And it must be said for Jimmy that he was consistent, for even when, on the following morning, Mr. Preston, the principal of the high school, announced that owing to structural defects in the building, school would be suspended for a few weeks while repairs were being made, Jimmy managed to subdue the ache in his heart and maintain a smiling exterior.

School was dismissed immediately after the announcement, and the boys, wild with delight, reached Bob's house in time to tell the news to Mr. Fordice, who was planning to leave on the noon train.

He was as pleased as themselves, for to the gratitude that he had felt toward the Radio Boys

was added a strong liking based upon what he had seen of them.

"That's great good luck," he said, as they told him that the parents of all had agreed to letting the boys go to Signal Island. "I can't tell you how pleased I am. You go right ahead and get ready. I've got business in New York that will detain me there a couple of days. I'll 'phone you when I'm ready to go to the island, and you can join me in the city. I'll purchase all the necessary supplies in New York, and we'll take them along with us. All you need to bring along are your fishing rods and tackle, and sending and receiving radio sets, and an outfit of the roughest outdoor clothes you have. If I'm any prophet, we're going to have a whale of a time."

"We're sure of that!" replied Bob.

"Perhaps we'll find some pirate treasure!" exclaimed Jimmy hopefully. "Did Zinc-Tooth use to hang out there?"

"I never heard of the gentleman," returned Mr. Fordice, with a twinkle in his eyes. "But other pirates used to, if old stories are true. But they're as dead now as Julius Cæsar. I can't promise you any pirates. But—" Here he hesitated for a moment. "Well, there may be some unusual happenings," he added mysteriously.

The boys' hearts beat high at the significant reference.

"Couldn't let us in on just what that means?" hinted Bob.

"Not just yet," replied Mr. Fordice. "I had a 'phone call yesterday that was very interesting. But I'll not scare you. I'll have to be going now," he added, looking at his watch. "You boys get everything ready, and you'll hear from me in a couple of days."

He bade them a cordial farewell and was off, leaving the boys agog with curiosity at the mysterious telephone message. What had there been in it that might "scare" them if they knew?

That same message was occupying the mind of Mr. Fordice, also, as he was whirled city-ward. He mulled it over and over, trying to probe its significance. The message had been:

"Better sell Signal Island to Joe Brown and keep away from it."

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

"WHAT was the meaning of that message?" Mr. Fordice asked himself again and again.

It was more of a command than a request. It conveyed a subtle threat. The tone of it aroused his anger. Mr. Fordice was not a man that it was well to threaten.

Who was Joe Brown? Mr. Fordice did not know him personally. In his pocket he had several letters bearing that signature. They had a New York postmark and were headed by an office address on Sixth Avenue. They had come to him at intervals in the last few weeks, each one more urgent than the one preceding.

The first had told him that the writer, acting as an agent for others, was desirous of buying Signal Island for the purpose of making it a pleasure resort. Mr. Fordice was asked to set a price upon it.

The latter had answered briefly, saying that he had no desire to sell. This evoked a second

letter from the would-be buyer, in which it was stated that Mr. Fordice had only to name his price, provided that it was within reason, and the purchase would be made immediately. Moreover, the payment would be in cash.

Again Mr. Fordice, who was in comfortable circumstances and in no need of money, declined to sell. But his curiosity had been aroused by the repeated offer, and when a third letter came, still more urgent and asking for a personal interview in New York, he had agreed to go to that city and talk the matter over.

Then had come the mysterious telephone call:

"Better sell Signal Island to Joe Brown and keep away from it."

Even if he sold it, why should he keep away from it? If it were indeed to be made into a pleasure resort, why should the purchaser warn off a possible patron? Usually such a project was desirous of attracting patrons rather than repelling them.

"Something decidedly fishy about it," concluded Mr. Fordice, as he put the letters he had been studying back into his pocket. "But I'll see Brown, anyway, and then I can make an intelligent decision."

Mr. Fordice had no difficulty in finding the

address that Brown had given. It was in one of the older sections of the avenue that had long since been left behind in the march of business uptown. The entrance hall was narrow and ill-lighted, and the small elevator was as shabby and unkempt as the operator.

Following the directions of the latter, Mr. Fordice got off at the third floor, and after following the winding corridor found himself before a door on which was the name "Joseph Brown." There was no indication of the business of the occupant.

The unfavorable impression that Mr. Fordice had felt on entering the building deepened. He had a conviction that he was in a building where little care was had for the character of the tenants as long as they paid the rent.

He opened the door and went in. A man who was seated at a desk looked up. He was a well dressed man of somewhat portly build, with a florid face that bore the marks of hard living and dissipation.

"This is Mr. Brown, I presume?" said Mr. Fordice.

"That's my name," replied the man, rising from his seat and taking in his visitor with a swift glance that traveled from his head to his feet, dwelling especially upon the feet. Mr. Fordice was no stranger to the fact that crooks

were accustomed to identify policemen and detectives by the heavy shoes usually worn by the guardians of the law.

"My name is Fordice," said the visitor. "I called to see you in reference to some letters you have written me about my property, Signal Island."

"Oh yes," replied Brown, with an effusive exhibition of geniality, as he extended his hand. "I'm glad to see you, Mr. Fordice. Sit down and take a load off your feet."

As Mr. Fordice seated himself he caught a glimpse of an inner room, thick with smoke, in which some roughly dressed men were playing cards.

Brown followed his glance and went to the door.

"Less noise in there," he commanded sharply, as he closed the door and returned to his seat.

He pushed a box of cigars over to his visitor.

"Have one?" he asked. "You needn't be afraid of them. They're the choicest Havanas and cost me a dollar apiece."

"No, thank you," said Mr. Fordice briefly.

"Perhaps you'd like a sip of something else?" continued Brown, as he swung open the door of a cabinet and brought out a bottle. "Pre-war stuff," he said, with a wink. "No millionaire on Fifth Avenue has anything better."

Again Mr. Fordice declined.

"Well, if you won't, you won't," remarked Brown, as he put the bottle back. "Now about that business of the island, Mr. Fordice. I hope you've come prepared to sell."

"I don't think I have," replied Mr. Fordice. "I called more out of courtesy than anything else because of the frequent letters you have sent. But I've almost made up my mind to retain the property. It's been in my family too long for me to let it go without good reasons."

"Ain't the price I offered you all right?" asked Brown, in a slightly belligerent tone.

"More than I think the island is worth as a business proposition," admitted his visitor frankly. "I really don't see how you can afford to offer such a price."

"I don't see that that need worry you if I'm willing to pay it," returned Brown. "I told you I wanted to buy it for a syndicate, who are planing to build a big summer resort hotel if they get the property. They see big money in it, and if they fall down, you'll have the plunks all the same. So why should you care?"

"What is the name of the syndicate?" asked Mr. Fordice.

"It's the—the—as a matter of fact it hasn't chosen a name yet," stammered Brown. "But

why should that bother you as long as they don't pay you in counterfeit money?"

"It would concern me a good deal," answered Mr. Fordice. "I always like to know the character and standing of men with whom I'm dealing. I wouldn't want the name of Signal Island to be identified with any project that I didn't know all about. Perhaps you can give me the name of some of your principals, so that I can have them looked up by some business agency."

"Nothing doing along that line," declared Brown. "Not but what I could, y'understand, and you'd find 'em all right. But they want to keep this quiet so there won't be any competition for the island. But I'm their agent all right, and anything I do they've O. K'd in advance. P'raps you think you won't get your money. Look here."

He took from his pocket a huge roll of bills of large denomination.

"This would choke a horse," he said, as he stripped off several thousand dollar bills and held them up for inspection. "Beat it, you fellows, I'm busy," he commanded sharply to two furtive-eyed individuals who opened the door just then. "Now then," he resumed, "money talks. I'm ready to pay you spot cash as soon as you make out the papers."

"No, I don't care to sell," replied Mr. Fordice, as he laid his hand on his hat.

"So you're one of the guys that money don't mean nothing to!" remarked Brown, with a sneer.

"I suppose it means as much to me as to anybody else," replied Mr. Fordice. "But there are some things that mean more. I simply don't care to sell."

"You don't mean to say you're going to turn down this cold cash that's just aching to get in your pocket?" exclaimed Brown.

"That's just what I mean," returned his visitor, rising to his feet.

Brown thrust the bills back into his pocket and an ugly frown puckered his brow.

"You'd better sell," he said, with a voice that had something of menace in it.

"I've decided not to sell," replied Mr. Fordice.

"You'd better sell," repeated Brown, and this time his tone had the chill and edge of steel.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Mr. Fordice, restraining his temper with difficulty. "Are you trying to threaten me?"

"You'd better sell," returned Brown doggedly.

"I wouldn't now, under any circumstances," declared Mr. Fordice. "And now that you've adopted that tone I don't mind telling you that one of the reasons I won't sell can be found in

this telegram," and he took the threatening message from his pocket. "Did you send this?"

"Don't know nothing about it." Brown waved it away. "But take my tip. You'd better sell."

"Good morning," said Mr. Fordice, opening the door.

"You'll remember my tip some time," Brown called after him. "There's more ways to kill a cat than choking it to death with cream."

The next two days proved busy ones for the Radio Boys. A good deal had to be done in the way of packing for the trip on such short notice. It had been decided to take along Bob's Super-Fourodyne, as that was the best equipped and most powerful set of all those belonging to the boys, and Bob exercised special care in the packing of his chief treasure.

The boys also took with them a sending set. This had been constructed by Joe from parts purchased by all of them. They remembered that Mr. Fordice had said an electric cable ran across Signal Island, from one shore of the cove to the other, and they thought it might be possible to use it.

"I've got a new sending key," said Joe, "and I'd like to try it out."

"Yes, and we want to try out that new wave meter, too," added Bob. "Paul Herrick says his

uncle in Scoville uses one and says it is a peach, better than any of the old kind."

"Gee, we can have lots of fun with the radio on that island," came from Herb. "It's just the thing to fool with on a rainy day."

The story of their coming trip had been bruited abroad, and the Radio Boys were the envy of the other boys in the town, who bemoaned their own lack of luck.

Buck and his cronies had been lying low since the fight on the roof. They did not care to meet the Radio Boys or, in fact, any of the other boys of the high school, all of whom were incensed against the rascals because of their attempt to hinder the success of the fair for the athletic fund.

On the evening of the second day following the departure of Mr. Fordice, Bob received a telephone call from the latter. Mr. Fordice stated that he had finished the business which had taken him to New York, and that he would be ready to leave the city for Signal Island a little after noon on the following day. He suggested that the boys leave Clintonia early in the morning on a train that would get them into New York at about eleven o'clock. He would be at the station to meet them, and they would go at once to the other station, from which a train would take them to Rock Point, the nearest railroad point to Signal

Island. From there they would be conveyed to the island by motor boat.

"And tell the boys," the message wound up, "that there promises to be plenty of adventure in store for them, more than I had in mind when I saw them last."

"That's bully," replied Bob. "Adventure is our middle name. We'll be there with bells on."

The Radio Boys had planned to go down to the train with their belongings in the car that belonged to Bob's father. As they would have to start at an earlier hour than they had counted on, they resolved, after the receipt of Mr. Fordice's message, to pack their things into the car on the night before, so that all they would have to do in the morning would be to jump in and be off.

The Layton yard extended back from the house for a distance of a couple of hundred feet, and the garage was at the end of the lot. There were a number of fine old trees on the grounds, so that at night the garage could not be seen from the house.

The Radio Boys had gathered at Bob's home, bringing their suitcases and packages along. First of all they carried out the precious Super-Fourodyne and the sending set and placed them carefully in the tonneau of the car, covering them with a robe to prevent scratching. Then

they returned to the house, brought out their other belongings, and piled them in.

"We've more room than I thought," remarked Bob, when all was done. "I thought the sets would take up so much space there wouldn't be room for much else."

He put his hand in mechanically to feel of the sets, and withdrew it instantly as if he had been stung.

"Why, they're not here!" he exclaimed in astonishment and alarm.

"You're crazy," declared Joe. "Didn't you and I put 'em there a few minutes ago?"

"Maybe they've been pushed over by the other packages," suggested Herb.

"I tell you they're not here!" cried Bob. "Yank these other things out."

He set the example, and in a moment the tonneau was emptied of the suitcases and other packages.

The complete radio outfit was gone!

For a moment the boys gazed at each other with expressions of stupefaction that quickly gave way to anger.

"It didn't walk away of itself!" cried Bob. "That's the work of Buck Looker and his Gang. Look alive, fellows. Get out your flashlights."

Each of the boys habitually carried one of those useful articles, and in a moment they had

them out and were flashing them over the surrounding greenery.

Back of the garage was a hedge, and Joe soon detected a place where the heavy bushes had been pushed aside and had not had time to get together again.

"They went through there!" cried Joe. "They can't be far off. Come along, fellows!"

In a flash the Radio Boys were through the hedge.

There was a wide space of vacant land, thickly studded with trees on the further side of the hedge, and by the light that came from a distant street lamp the Radio Boys could discern a group of dark figures carrying heavy objects between them.

"There they are!" cried Herb.

Bob set off in pursuit with the speed of a deer, his comrades close at his heels.

Either the figures in front had heard Herb's cry or had caught the flash of the lights, for they seemed to be thrown suddenly in confusion. They hesitated a moment and seemed to confer. Then they dropped the objects they were carrying and took to their heels.

But the Radio Boys were the fleeter, with the exception of Jimmy, who however, did his best, and they speedily overtook the fugitives. They were helped in this by the fact that the latter

were forced to climb a fence that barred their way to the street beyond.

They were halfway up this when Bob and his companions came upon them and yanked them to the ground.

Then ensued a lusty battle. In the melee, Terence Mooney, the lightest and smallest of all, had managed to scale the fence and drop to the other side. But Buck Looker—for Bob's conjecture had proved right—Carl Lutz, and Bud Hayes, another member of the gang, were left, and what the Radio Boys did to them, the rascals long remembered.

There was no singling out of a special antagonist. The Radio Boys sailed into them all, their arms swinging like flails, getting in their blows where they would do the most good. Their strength was doubled by the justifiable anger that possessed them, while their opponents, though they fought back with all their strength, had no such stimulus.

In a few minutes the short and sharp battle was over. Buck lay sprawled on the ground nursing a bleeding nose. Lutz backed up against the fence, whimpering that he had had enough, and Bud Hayes was staggering about so completely groggy that no one had the heart to hit him again.

"You unspeakable cur!" panted Bob, as he

stood over Buck. "You thief! Why shouldn't I call a cop just now and put you where you belong?"

"We weren't stealing anything," muttered Buck sullenly. "We were just going to hide the sets. It was just a practical joke."

"Yes, we know your jokes," put in Joe. "They're all of them low-down, dirty tricks. Some day they'll land you in jail. How many lickings have you and your gang got to have before you learn to leave us alone? You ought to know by this time that you're monkeying with a buzzsaw."

"Keep an eye on them, boys, until I take a look at the sets," directed Bob. "If I find they're injured, we'll start and lick them all over again."

Fortunately for Buck and his cronies, Bob found that the sets had dropped in a clump of brush that had yielded beneath the weight, but not suffered them to reach the ground. To all appearance there was no damage, except for a few scratches.

"Let them go, fellows," commanded Bob, returning to his companions. "They've got something to remember us by for several days to come. But just remember, Buck Looker, that we're about fed up with you and your pals, and the next time you try anything of this kind you'll get something that you'll remember all your life."

The Radio Boys left the rascals, picked up the sets, and returned to the garage.

"Tiger, where art thou?" warbled Jimmy, as soon as he could get his breath.

"He'd have come in handy to-night," affirmed Herb.

"Lucky that you happened to feel in the tonneau for the sets," put in Joe. "What do you think the big idea was, anyway?"

"Just to get even for the other night, as Buck said he would do," conjectured Jimmy. "They wanted to put a little poison in our enjoyment of the trip. They hoped we wouldn't discover our loss until we got to the train. Then we'd have to hunt the sets up and miss our train or else go on without 'em and miss a lot of the fun we had counted on. In any case we'd be in trouble, and that would have been nuts for Buck and his gang."

"Ten to one, too, they'd have ruined the sets, so that when we did get 'em again they wouldn't be worth anything," added Herb. "Oh, they're a sweet set, all right!"

"Better take the radio up to the house and put it in the car again in the morning," counseled Joe.

"I think they've had enough of our game for to-night," replied Bob. "But just to make sure we'll follow your advice."

The boys were off bright and early the next morning. The day was clear and beautiful, and they were all in the highest of spirits. The run-in of the night before had proved an exhilaration.

"There was just one thing that saddened me this morning," remarked Bob, with an expression that was anything but sad, as they were speeding toward New York. "Buck and his gang weren't down at the station to see us off and tell us how sorry they were to see us go."

"No doubt they meant to, but overslept," observed Joe.

"Wouldn't they feel bad, if they heard that Signal Island was swept by a tidal wave?" suggested Jimmy.

"They're praying that every wave will do its duty," laughed Herb.

In jest and laughter the time passed quickly, and almost before they knew it the train was pulling into the great station in New York City.

Mr. Fordice was there to meet them, and he gave them a cordial welcome.

"So you're all set for Signal Island, eh?" he said genially as he shook hands.

"All set and r'arin' to go," replied Bob.

"All we've been afraid of was that you might sell it in the meantime, and then the trip would be off," added Bob.

"Nothing like that," returned Mr. Fordice; "al-

though a good deal of pressure has been put on me to sell since I've been in New York. But it's still mine, and will be mine, I expect, for a long time to come. But let's hurry now and get your baggage, for we won't have much more than time to get over to the other station."

The boys hurried to such purpose that they reached the other train in ample time, and settled themselves for a long ride that would not end until some time after dark.

For several hours the train pursued its way through busy towns and thriving villages until it reached Roxburg Junction. There they changed to a mixed train, chiefly freight with only one passenger coach attached, that ran down through the sparsely settled seaside towns.

The boys noticed the great change in the dress and vocations of the few passengers, compared with those they had traveled with on the main line. Most of the men that came on board at the little stations were clothed in fishermen's garb or in the dungarees of laborers. Their talk was loud and their speech illiterate.

One group that boarded the train a little before dark was distinctly rough, the kind that one would not care to meet in the dark or on a deserted road. Many of them had been drinking.

The boys noticed that one of them fixed his eyes

on Mr. Fordice with a glance of recognition that deepened into a scowl.

"Seems to know you," remarked Joe to Mr. Fordice, who was sitting in the seat with him.

"Yes," returned Mr. Fordice, "I met him once on Signal Island. He's a bad character. Pay no attention to him."

The man in question circulated among the others, talking to them in low tones, casting frequent glances toward Mr. Fordice and the boys which indicated that they were the object of discussion.

After he had passed on toward the back of the coach, one of the rough fellows seated behind Bob and Herb reached over and touched Bob on the arm.

"Say, young feller," he said in a voice husky from drink, "are you going to Signal Island?"

"Yes," replied Bob briefly.

The voice of the man sank lower and there was a suggestion of threat in it.

"Call it off, bo," he warned. "Don't you go to Signal Island. It ain't a healthy place to visit!"

CHAPTER VIII

A HINT OF DANGER

BOB LAYTON was thunder-struck at the menace conveyed by the stranger's words.

He turned and looked more closely at the man who had given him the odd warning. The latter was small, but stocky and powerfully built. His mouth was thick-lipped and brutal and his large ears stood out from a bull head like flapping sails.

"I'll bet he can wag them," Bob thought irrelevantly, referring to the stranger's ears. "At any rate, I'll know him again when I see him."

Aloud, he said:

"Perhaps I ought to thank you for that warning, but I don't. In the first place I don't get what you mean, and in the second I don't care a—"

"Cat's whisker," finished Herb, as he, too, turned to eye the man curiously. Sitting next to Bob, he had heard the low-voiced warning and had been puzzled by it.

The man's mien changed. His brows contracted in a heavy frown.

"All right," he growled. "There's some can take a friendly hint and there's some that can't."

"Right you are," agreed Bob cheerfully. "We're the ones that can't. Signal Island is the place we're bound for, and I'd like to see any one try to stop us from getting there."

There was an undercurrent of resolution in Bob's easy tone that evidently grated on the man. His manner became gruffer, with a suggestion of menace.

"A friendly tip is one thing," snapped the fellow, "but a kick ain't quite so friendly. Better use your head, bo, and take the tip. I'm telling you."

Before Bob could answer the man got up and walked off, leaving the boys to an indignant review of the conversation.

"That's the snail's shoe, all right," said Herb. "What do you suppose the poor fish meant, Bob?"

"What he meant seems plain enough," returned Bob thoughtfully. He was beginning to think that there was more in this trip to Signal Island than met the eye. "He wanted to scare us off from the island."

"Any one might think it belonged to him," snorted Herb scornfully, his brow furrowing and his eyes beginning to shine with joyous excite-

ment. "I say, old boy, it begins to look as though we'd have a fight on our hands right at the start. Contradict me at your peril."

Bob grinned.

"Far be it from me to start anything with an old and valued friend," he laughed. "I agree with you in everything you say. I'd be willing to bet a hundred berries that our friend Bat Ear has a strong personal interest in keeping us off the island."

"And I'd give another hundred berries to know just what that reason is," replied Herb.

"He seems to be having an interested confab with his cronies right now," remarked Bob.

Herb followed his friend's glance toward the rear of the car where "Bat Ear" stood in earnest talk with the rough-looking men who had boarded the train with him.

From time to time they glanced in the direction of the Radio Boys. Once one of them took a step in the direction of Bob and Herb, but evidently changed his mind and turned to his companions again. Soon the whole group settled back in their seats and seemed not to notice the boys again.

Jimmy, Joe, and Mr. Fordice had been engaged in a laughing conversation and had not noticed the incident.

Bob and Herb weighed the advisability of tell-

ing their companions about it, but finally decided that the subject had bettter not be broached while they were on the train.

"We don't want to make those rascals think we've taken their warning too seriously," concluded Bob. "Just treat it as though it were a joke not worth thinking of twice. After we get out at the station we'll tell Mr. Fordice all about it and see what he thinks of it."

"He'll laugh at it the same as we do," prophesied Herb. To his surprise, Bob did not altogether agree with him.

"I'm not quite sure he'll think it exactly a laughing matter," mused Bob. "Mark my words, Herb, we'll hear some more of these fellows before we're through!"

"Oh, well, let's get the bad taste out of our mouths," suggested Herb. "There's plenty of better things to think about. Did you ever hear that one about the Scotchman who started out to buy Christmas presents?"

"No," replied Bob innocently.

"And you never will," said Herb.

Bob made a pass at him.

"Bit, didn't you?" grinned Herb, as he blocked the blow. "Now here's another one."

"Oh, go to grass!" retorted Bob.

"I'm going to the next greenest thing I can

find," chuckled Herb. "Now tell me this. Why won't a Scotchman wear rubber heels?"

"Give it up," replied Bob, groaning.

"You're a quitter," declared Herb. "Well, I'll tell you. A Scotchman won't wear rubber heels because they give too much. Gee, but they're good ones, if I do say it myself. I'll have to spring them on Joe and Jimmy."

"What grudge have you got against them?" chaffed Bob. "I thought they were pals of yours."

Just then the trainman threw open the door.

"Rock Point!" he bawled.

Jimmy and Joe were in high spirits as they piled off the train onto the small platform of the desolate-looking station. Bob and Herb were not quite so exuberant, though equally excited. They could not wholly banish from mind the mysterious warning they had received.

"There go Bat Ear and the other three now," said Herb in a low tone, as he nudged Bob's elbow and pointed toward the further end of the station. Bob was just in time to see four figures slip stealthily off into the darkness.

"Going to tell Mr. Fordice now?" whispered Herb eagerly.

"Better wait till we get to the dock," replied Bob. "I feel as though we ought to put some

space between us and those roughnecks before we spill anything."

"The dock is only a short distance away," Mr. Fordice said, as he looked about to see that the boys were all with him. "I have a motor boat there that will take us over to Signal Island in a jiffy."

"Hooray for Signal Island!" cried Jimmy enthusiastically. "Gee, Mr. Fordice, I can't wait to get there!"

"There aren't any bakeshops where we're going," remarked Herb, with a chuckle.

"And what will poor Doughnuts do then, poor thing?" sang Joe, in a voice that was as doleful as it was unmelodious.

"Humph!" grunted Jimmy. "You don't suppose I came without stocking up my pocket pantry first, do you?"

"Knave!" shouted Herb. "On him, boys! Search him well and let no smallest doughnut escape."

But Mr. Fordice protected Jimmy from the laughing onslaught of his chums.

"Any one with foresight enough to bring along a pocket pantry deserves the reward of his virtue," he declared, as he interposed in Jimmy's behalf before the other boys had emptied his pockets.

"Some day I'll slip fishhooks into those pockets

and then you crooks will get what's coming to you," declared the indignant Jimmy, as he retreated behind Mr. Fordice to save the remnants of his fortune.

That gentleman smilingly calmed the tumult and led the way to the dock. The crisp, salt tang of the breeze was in their nostrils and they felt the cool whip of it across their faces. The sound of the waves breaking against the timbers of the wharf was music to their ears.

There were several craft of various sizes moored to the pier, and Mr. Fordice led the way to one of the largest of these, near the extreme end.

"This is my motor boat," he said. "I'll go aboard first to make sure everything is in prime working order, and you boys can come after me."

Bob decided that this was the time when he and Herb should tell their leader what had happened on board the train. He touched the arm of Mr. Fordice. The latter turned quickly, and it seemed to Bob that his gaze searched the shadows with a suggestion of uneasiness.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Only something curious that happened on board the train," replied Bob. "Herb and I thought you ought to know."

Instantly Mr. Fordice was all interested attention.

"By all means," he said. "What happened on the train?"

While Joe and Jimmy evinced an interest only second to Mr. Fordice's own, Bob related, with now and then a contribution from Herb, what had occurred between them and the man with the bat-like ears.

"We really don't suppose it has a great deal of importance," Bob finished. "But we thought that you ought to know about it, anyway."

"I'm very glad you told me here and now," replied Mr. Fordice. His voice and manner were so grave that the boys instantly surmised that he attached far greater importance to what they had just told him than they had themselves. They hung upon his words with the most intense interest. "It gives us a chance to renounce our adventure," Mr. Fordice added slowly, "since we are not yet fully committed to it."

"Give up our adventure?" cried the boys, in dismay.

CHAPTER IX

RETREAT OR GO FORWARD?

"WHAT on earth do you mean by giving up our adventure, Mr. Fordice?" asked Herb, after the brief silence that followed the amazed boys' first exclamation.

"I'll tell you what I mean," replied their leader, his voice still very grave. "When I have put all the facts before you, you must decide for yourselves whether to go on or to go back."

"I'd like to see us go back of our own accord!" exclaimed Joe.

Mr. Fordice stopped him from further protest by a motion of his hand.

"Wait just a minute," he said. "I don't want you to give an opinion one way or the other until I have said my say. Now come over here. That's it. Toward the edge of the dock. I don't want to run any risks of our conversation being overheard."

Here was mystery and adventure with a vengeance, thought the Radio Boys, as they pressed

close to Mr. Fordice and glanced about them for possible figures skulking in the shadows.

"I recognized one of those men on the train," began Mr. Fordice in a quick, low tone, as though he meant to tell his story in a hurry. "I had met him before."

"Where?" queried Jimmy.

"On Signal Island." The owner of the island hesitated a moment as though making up his mind to go on with a full explanation. "I don't want to scare you boys," he continued. "At the same time, I feel that you have a right to know the full details of the case. If, by keeping them from you, any harm should befall you, I would never be able to forgive myself."

"You don't need to be afraid of scaring us, Mr. Fordice," put in Bob. "We wouldn't care much for an adventure unless it had plenty of snap in it."

In the darkness Mr. Fordice smiled wryly.

"I imagine this may have plenty of snap in it," he vouchsafed.

Then he told them of the repeated letters he had had from the mysterious Joe Brown urging him to sell the island to him.

"What does he want it for?" asked Joe, in puzzled fashion.

"Said he wanted to make a summer resort out of it," replied their leader. "But I had no desire

or intention of selling it, since it had been in my family for so many years. But the determination of this fellow Brown to get hold of the property seemed to strengthen with every refusal on my part, until he finally resorted to an open threat."

"Gee, this is getting good!" exclaimed Jimmy. "I can see the pirates are not all dead yet."

"What do you mean—an open threat?" asked Herb.

"Some one—perhaps this Joe Brown himself; at any rate, some one acting in his interest—called me on the telephone." In the older man's voice was a suggestion of the anger that message had kindled. "He intimated rather broadly that I'd better sell the island to Joe Brown or take the consequences."

"I remember!" exclaimed Bob. "That message was the one you wouldn't tell us about. You said you were afraid it might scare us."

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Fordice. "Have I?"

"Have you what?" they asked in chorus.

"Scared you by all this mystery." Mr. Fordice's tone was bantering, but the boys could see that the question, nevertheless, had been asked in all seriousness.

"Not a bit of it!" cried Herb sturdily, and the other lads echoed him with such emphasis that Mr. Fordice seemed convinced.

"You still want to go to the island?" he asked.

"You bet your life we do!" declared Joe.

"I'd like to see you keep us away from it after what you've told us!" added Jimmy. "I tell you, old Zinc-Tooth won't have anything on us by the time we get through with this."

"But what I'd like to know, Mr. Fordice," said Bob thoughtfully, "is the motive behind these warnings you've received. I suppose there must be some good—or bad—reason for them."

"Undoubtedly," assented their host. "I have naturally thought of smugglers."

"Rum runners!" exclaimed Joe. "I'll bet that's it! They think if we camp out here, we'll probably discover that they're bringing in bootleg liquor and that we'll give them away to the authorities."

"And they want to buy the island so that they can have a free hand," commented Herb.

"That's why that fellow in the train got after Bob and Herb with a warning when they found that we intended to go to the island in spite of everything!" Jimmy added, in a state of huge excitement.

"It may not be liquor," Mr. Fordice pointed out. "There are many different kinds of smugglers and all sorts of smuggled goods. They may be trying to get opium or other prohibited drugs into the country, for all I know. The island, if

deserted, would be an ideal spot for carrying on such a traffic. Vessels could land their cargoes after dark and then take their chances later on of getting them to the mainland across this narrow channel."

"If that's their game, they're apt to be pretty dangerous fellows to rub elbows with," remarked Bob.

"That's just what I want to point out," Mr. Fordice said quickly. "If these men are what they seem to be from their looks and actions, they're the kind that should be given a wide berth. And I don't want to take you boys to Signal Island without explaining fully what dangers you may be facing.

"On the other hand," he added, as the boys started to interrupt, "there is a possibility, even a probability, that we shall run no risk of any kind. This man, Joe Brown, if that is really his name, may simply be putting up a big bluff, and when he and his pals see that they cannot frighten us off the island they will probably decide to make the best of it and let the whole matter drop. Anyway, we have the motor boat, and if things get a little too warm for us on the island we can always get over to the mainland in a few minutes."

"They'll be the ones that will be scooting to the mainland," muttered Joe.

Mr. Fordice smiled.

"Well," he said, "now that you have looked on both sides of the question, what is the verdict? Shall we go back or go on?"

"On!" the four boys cried together.

"That seems to make it unanimous," observed Mr. Fordice, and from his tone the boys guessed that he was heartily pleased with their decision. "On it is then, and may you never have reason to regret your choice!"

"Just one more question, Mr. Fordice," put in Bob, as the former turned toward the motor launch. "You say that you recognized one of the men on the train as being a fellow you had seen one day on Signal Island. Could you describe what the fellow looks like?"

"I imagine it was your friend with the big ears, Bob—the one who threatened you."

"Is it possible that old Bat Ear and the mysterious Joe Brown are one and the same person?" asked Herb.

Mr. Fordice shook his head.

"No," he said. "I omitted telling you boys that I met Joe Brown, if that is his real name, in New York. He was wholly different from these roughnecks that he may be using as his tools. He was of the city, well-dressed and prosperous looking. He had a certain amount of suavity, but that was largely veneer, for when

I persisted in refusing to sell, his native coarseness cropped out and he became abusive. But come now, it's getting pretty late and we'd better get started."

The boys agreed with him and got aboard willingly, eager to get to the island that now had more alluring promise of excitement than they had imagined when they started on their trip.

The launch was a small one, built more for speed than comfort, but the boys found plenty of room to bestow themselves, while Mr. Fordice started the engine and swiftly left the shore behind.

For a few minutes all were silent, listening to the putt-putt of the engine and drinking in with delight deep draughts of the cool, salt air.

"Say, this promises to be some adventure," said Jimmy at last, and from the muffled tones of his voice the others guessed that he was munching one of his doughnuts. "At any moment we may expect to see a pirate ship looming on our prow. Hey, fellows! what's that?"

CHAPTER X

A CLOSE SHAVE

THE others turned swiftly at Jimmy Plummer's words and saw a jagged outline of land jutting into the water.

"Signal Island," announced Mr. Fordice quietly.

"Hurrah, here we are, fellows! Here's where we get off!" shouted Herb.

"Now the question is," muttered Mr. Fordice, peering ahead of him, "can I find that inlet in the dark?"

This soon became a matter of some anxiety to the boys as well as to their host.

The island and its environs were shrouded in darkness. The night was unusually black. There was no moon and the stars were hardly visible through the mist. Only when the launch was close inshore could the outline of the land be seen.

Mr. Fordice was a good sailor and had made the trip often, but never at night. He thought

he knew where he was, but was not sure enough to be comfortable. He was wondering now whether it would not have been better to come by daylight.

"I'll confess that I timed our arrival after dark so as to make it as inconspicuous as possible," he remarked. "If there are smugglers on the island, I did not care to warn them by coming across from the mainland in broad daylight or by using a searchlight. Once on the island, we can scout about at our leisure and with caution."

"Not a bad idea," commented Herb. "Makes one feel adventurous, too, stealing in to shore in the dead of night."

"Not so late as all that, Herb," laughed Joe. "What time do you think this is, one o'clock in the morning?"

"It may even be that late before we reach shore, if I don't find that inlet," observed Mr. Fordice.

He spoke lightly, but it was plain to the boys that he was getting anxious.

"Is the shore line rocky at all?" asked Bob.

"In spots," replied their host, "and I only hope that we won't find one of those spots too suddenly."

He had retarded the motor of the launch so that now she was under almost no headway. At

this point the current seemed strong, however, and the small boat drifted in toward shore much more swiftly than the boys liked.

Mr. Fordice, peering forward through the darkness, gave a sudden exclamation of relief; though to the boys it seemed as though it ought to be one of alarm, for directly ahead of them and not more than a hundred feet away loomed a jagged mass of rock, cruel and forbidding.

"We'll hit it!" cried Jimmy, in consternation.

"Turn on the searchlight for a minute," cried the owner of the island.

The others stared ahead at what seemed certain doom. The waves dashed angrily against the rocks, receding with a hiss like that of a snake. The waters, caught and tortured by conflicting currents, swirled about the launch like a miniature whirlpool. A few seconds more, and it seemed inevitable that they would be dashed upon the rocks, their boat smashed to fragments, themselves thrown into the seething waves, if they escaped the peril of the rocks.

Only Mr. Fordice was unperturbed. He wrenched the steering wheel about, at the same time turning the engine on full force.

Like a wild thing the motor boat leaped straight for the rocks!

The boys drew in their breath and held it, expecting every moment to feel the splintering,

sickening crash of wood on the rapier-sharp points of rock.

Doom seemed to be rushing down to meet the motor boat. For one wild moment it seemed as though Mr. Fordice had lost his head completely and was leading them on to a horrible fate.

Then the boat swerved, tilted a trifle, shipped a little water over her side, skidded along for several feet, and slipped quietly and suddenly into an inlet of still water!

Their escape had been so sudden, so apparently miraculous to the boys, that at first they could scarcely believe in their good luck.

"How did it happen?" gasped Joe. "I had us smashed and drowned that time for sure."

"Gee, so did I," agreed Jimmy, his usually red face a little paler than usual. "I never saw such a whirlpool in my life."

"Out with the light," warned Mr. Fordice.

"That was mighty fine work, Mr. Fordice," said Bob, in hearty admiration of their host's steadiness and seamanship. "Full speed ahead and that sharp turn of the wheel were the only things that saved us, I guess."

"It would have been dangerous if I had not known the channel thoroughly," replied Mr. Fordice modestly. "I've been through it scores of times and know it like a book. Usually though

I choose a quieter spot for a landing. But it was hard to find that in this darkness, and as soon as I recognized this I determined to make it. I knew there was no danger, but I'm not surprised that you should think there was. I suppose you feel pretty well shaken up."

"Not so much so that I wouldn't be willing to go outside and have it all over again," declared Joe.

"Speak for yourself, old-timer!" exclaimed Herb. "As far as I'm concerned, I'll take such experiences one at a time."

Mr. Fordice turned off the motor and allowed the boat to drift slowly in toward shore. It grounded on a gently sloping beach, and Bob, who had made his way to the bow, jumped over the side, towrope in hand.

The others followed until they were all standing ankle deep in the water.

"We'll make the old tub fast and cover her with the tarpaulin," said Mr. Fordice. "Then we'll go up to the house."

The boys were all stirred up by the thrills they had so recently experienced, and were enjoying themselves hugely.

"Few things like this have ever happened to us before, and yet we've had a lot of exciting times," remarked Herb.

"If the finish of our adventure is as exciting

as the beginning, we'll have nothing to complain about," chimed in Bob.

"I can hardly wait till morning to start in and explore this place," Jimmy added. "Bet I'll be the first to stumble on the pirates' treasure."

"The what?" asked Joe.

"Treasure, pirates' treasure," Jimmy explained patiently. "Don't you remember Mr. Fordice almost said—"

"He never said a word about pirates' treasure," interrupted Joe scornfully. "He only said that his grandfather or great grandfather or some other ancient relative of his buried his own money to keep it from the pirates."

"Well, that's what I'm telling you! Mr. Fordice did say that!"

"What's this Mr. Fordice said?" asked that gentleman, coming up behind them. He had made the motor boat fast, and was in excellent spirits now that he had the boys all safely ashore. "Who speaks of me behind my back?"

"Did you ever say anything about a treasure being buried on the island, Mr. Fordice?" asked Bob, as they started to walk up the sandy slope.

"Not that I know of."

"You hear that, old piece of cheese?" Herb demanded derisively of Jimmy.

"Though I must say I've been on the point of it more than once," finished Mr. Fordice.

"What?" the Radio Boys cried, peering at him through the darkness.

"Do you actually mean that there is a treasure buried on the island?" queried Bob eagerly.

"Why, I haven't anything tangible to go on, and I'd hate to have to hold my breath until I laid my hands on it," was the disappointing reply.

Jimmy, in whose active imagination the idea of pirates' treasure had originated, felt his disappointment more keenly than any of the others. He had seemed on the point of vindication, and now all his support had been taken from him. Feeling injured, he brought forth another doughnut and munched it aggrievedly.

"But there is a rumor?" Joe insisted.

"Oh, yes, an old, old one," Mr. Fordice responded. In spite of his careless tone, the boys noticed that he lowered his voice when speaking on the subject. "There's a legend in our family that my great-great-grandfather hid a treasure in the ground near the old stone house."

"Buried it," murmured Herb. "Why didn't I bring a spade?"

They all laughed, and Mr. Fordice assured Herb that he would find several such implements where they were going.

"But why did he bury it?" asked Joe. "Was that his idea of putting it in the bank?"

Mr. Fordice chuckled.

"I guess it was, in a way," he answered. "Anyway, to bury your money in those old days was about the only safe way of keeping it, I should think."

"I suppose that was because of the pirates," put in Jimmy hopefully.

"Were there really pirates roaming this coast in the old days?" asked Joe.

"There certainly were pirates, and plenty of them," returned Mr. Fordice to Joe's question. "While they usually confined themselves to the Spanish main, they more than once harried our coasts. My ancestor must have realized that there was serious danger, or he wouldn't have buried his money—that is, if he did bury it."

"Hasn't any one ever tried to find it?" asked Bob.

"Oh, yes, many times. But not a sign of treasure could be found. The old gentleman evidently made a good job of it."

"Maybe the search wasn't thorough enough," suggested Herb. "I think I'd begin at one end of the island and dig my way steadily straight across it."

Mr. Fordice smiled and shook his head.

"That would be a pretty hard undertaking, Herb," he remarked. "If this were just a sand-pit, it would be different. But the island is not so small, you know, and considering that a good

half of it is covered by dense woods, the search at best would prove a difficult one."

"But didn't he make a map?" asked Jimmy, whose long acquaintance in books with Zinc-Tooth the Pirate made maps a matter-of-course accompaniment to buried treasure.

"If he did," replied their host, "it has never been discovered. I'm inclined to think the whole thing only an extravagant story, prompted by the romance of those old days and the general idea that my ancestor was a very, very rich man. Anyway, I wouldn't give it a second thought if I were you."

Not give it a second thought! He might as well have commanded the boys not to breathe.

"What's that?" asked Joe suddenly, as a building loomed up before them in the darkness.

"That," returned Mr. Fordice, "is the old stone house that will be your home for some time to come."

CHAPTER XI

GETTING THEIR BEARINGS

THE old stone house! It had an added glamour for the boys now. The man had lived there who was reputed to have buried a fabulous treasure somewhere in the vicinity, perhaps within a stone's throw.

"Wriggling snakes!" exclaimed Herb Fennington. "I see where we're going to be little diggers of the soil for the next few days. Say, fellows, home was never like this!"

"You said it! But listen, you. Whoever finds the treasure first has got to divvy up with the rest. That's understood."

This was Jimmy's contribution, and the calm certainty with which he spoke provoked a chorus of jeers. But Jimmy never turned a hair, content to wait for time to vindicate him.

Mr. Fordice unlocked the front door, swung it open and flashed his electric torch about the empty hall.

There was something weired about that shifting

light. The boys, already strung to a high pitch of excitement, almost expected the spotlight of the torch to fall upon a sinister face peering at them from the shadows of the hall, a scarred face, a bearded face, with a bandana wrapped about the forehead, rings in the ears, a knife between the teeth.

"Maybe the ghost of old Zinc-Tooth makes this place his hangout," muttered Jimmy.

"If we don't meet anything worse than ghosts, we're lucky," replied Herb. "I shouldn't wonder if old Bat-Ear could give Zinc-Tooth cards and spades and beat him out."

Meanwhile Mr. Fordice's electric torch had found the electric switch it had been searching for.

"I knew the switch was somewhere here along the wall," said Mr. Fordice. "The electricity hasn't been in very long, and I'd almost forgotten where the switch was placed," he said, as he pressed the button.

But there was no answering flash, and the hall still remained in darkness.

"That's queer," he remarked in a puzzled tone. "It always has worked all right before this, but now it seems out of commission. I wonder what the matter is."

He turned the light of the electric torch to

where the bulb should have been, but there was no bulb there.

"I didn't know that any of them were missing," remarked their host. "Perhaps they're all right in the other rooms."

But there again examination proved that all the bulbs had been removed.

"That leaves us in a pretty mess!" exclaimed Mr. Fordice, sorely vexed. "I suppose that's due to the mischief of some chance visitors. Probably the work of some gang of boys who have come over here in a boat and taken advantage of the deserted condition of the house to play a joke on the absent owner. A perverted sense of humor, if you ask me. There's an oil lamp fortunately in the hall, and we'll light it," and this was soon done, though the light given was far from satisfactory.

"Oh, well, we can get some more bulbs from the mainland when the boat comes over," observed Bob. "And as long as the current is all right we can get plenty of juice for sending out radio messages if we want to."

"If we can get the thing going here," added Jimmy.

"Lucky for us that the jokers couldn't steal the current too," philosophized Joe.

"Come on into the big front room," directed Mr. Fordice. "I'll show you a place where you

can store your radio sets till morning. when you can set them up."

"If we're going to sleep upstairs, don't you think we'd better take the sets up with us?" asked Bob, who hated to be parted from his treasure since his experience with Buck and his gang.

Mr. Fordice smiled.

"Wait till you see the closet I have for you, and I think that uneasy feeling will disappear," he said.

The boys followed their host into the room, and when he threw his light into a massive closet that led off from it, examined it with interest.

"More like a room," commented Joe. "Deep and wide enough to set up a small cot and sleep comfortably."

"No windows though," remarked Bob. "A little shy on fresh air for a bedroom. What's that?" he asked, pointing to a square board that seemed to cover an opening in the roof of the closet.

"That's a trapdoor," was the answer.

"That sounds good," put in Herb. "I begin to like this house. Where does the trapdoor lead to, Mr. Fordice?"

"To a sort of storeroom, I think," the latter answered. "I never have lifted that trapdoor myself. I only remember it as having always

been here. But what I wanted you to notice about this closet," he went on, "was the thickness of its door and the weight of the padlock, to which I have the only key. When your radio sets are locked in there it would take a charge of dynamite to get at them."

"Does look perfectly safe," admitted Bob. "In they go. Now let's rustle some grub."

"You said something!" exclaimed Jimmy, with feeling.

The boys placed the radio sets carefully in the rear of the closet. Mr. Fordice snapped the padlock and placed the key on his ring.

"And now," he smiled, "as you so elegantly observed, Bob, let's rustle some grub."

Their host's foresight had seen to it that the pantry was well stocked with canned goods. The boys were so famished after their trip that they would have fallen to on potato peelings, if necessary, and the canned beans, salmon, bread and butter and tea tasted like ambrosia.

"After we've had time to look over the island and get our bearings, we'll be able to arrange over on the mainland for fresh milk and eggs and perhaps a chicken or two now and then," observed their host. "For the present we'll have to pretend that we're camping out in more or less gypsy style."

"This suits us fine," replied Joe. "Nothing ever tasted better."

"Anyway, we came to the island to camp out, so the rougher the grub the better," declared Herb.

"As long as there's plenty of it," added prudent Jimmy.

"There ought to be mighty fine fishing around here, so we can vary our diet," observed Bob. "I guess we'll have to set to work."

After they had cleared away the remains of their feast, their host took the boys upstairs and showed them the rooms they were to occupy during their stay on the island.

They were two large rooms at the front of the house overlooking the water. Each had in it two army cots. Then, from a hall closet, Mr. Fordice brought out some heavy blankets, smelling strongly of camphor.

Bob threw up one of the windows, and a cool, salt breeze blew in, freshening the close room.

"Going to be cold before morning, I'll bet," said Jimmy. "Whew, but that breeze feels good!"

Mr. Fordice had for himself a small room at the rear of the house, with an old couch for a bed, and not much other furniture.

"The garret is a gold mine, and if you need more furniture in your rooms you can probably

find some up there to-morrow," Mr. Fordice told the boys. "I fully believe you could find almost anything you wanted there, if you only searched long enough. Well, good-night, boys. Hope you have a good sleep. In the morning you can assemble your radio sets and get busy at the thing you love best."

"In the morning we'll do more than that," declared Joe, as the boys prepared to retire. "Say, fellows, I can't wait to see what this island looks like."

"I think we'd better keep our eyes open for things other than scenery," suggested Bob. "We don't want to walk into any smuggler's lair, if we can help it."

"The old radio may come in very handy if there really are smugglers on the island," went on Joe. "Seems to me we'd better waste no time in getting it assembled and in good working order."

"Gee, maybe that's where the old man hid his money," Jimmy spoke after a long silence, during which he had been lost in thought that seemed very absorbing.

"Now, what's the matter with Jimmy?" asked Herb. "What old man and what money?"

"He's speaking about Mr. Fordice's ancestor and the fortune he hid so that the pirates wouldn't get it," volunteered Bob. "Has your great mind

already hit on the resting place of this hidden wealth, Jimmy?"

"The trapdoor in the closet!" Jimmy cried, his voice vibrating with excitement.

"Say, do you think that old rascal you seem so fond of was the only one who would think of it?" asked Herb disgustedly. "Don't you suppose the other people who have looked for the old man's treasure thought of the trapdoor and had sense enough to look behind it?"

"Why so?" retorted Jimmy stoutly. "Here's Mr. Fordice himself says that he never looked. Some one's got to be the first, and why shouldn't we be the ones?"

"I'll bet you'll be the twentieth," gibed Joe.

"Jimmy's on the rampage," laughed Herb. "Go to it, Doughnuts, but remember that when you find it you'll have to divide with the gang. That's understood."

"Humph!" snorted Jimmy. "That's the way! Let Jimmy do the work, and the rest of us will enjoy the fruits!"

"All right, we'll take the fruits, but we'll leave you the doughnuts, Jimmy," laughed Joe, and Jimmy grinned and dropped his unwonted air of seriousness.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE SCOUT

THE boys went to sleep that night to the music of the waves dashing upon the rocks, to dream of all sorts of adventures in which they and their radio always took the leading parts.

The sun, shining brightly into the window, roused them to reality and the hope that on this first day of their stay on the island a host of interesting things would happen.

Jimmy was the only one who slept peacefully on. Herb was forced to sit down on him hard a couple of times before the rotund Doughnuts could be persuaded to open his eyes.

"Avast there, you lubber!" Jimmy finally cried, making a lunge at his tormentor. "What do you want to do, knock in all my ribs?"

"Not all of them," replied Herb. "One busted one ought to be enough to wake you up. For that matter, I don't believe you have any ribs. You feel like a pillow when I sit down on you."

He heaped injury on insult by again coming down hard on Jimmy's recumbent form.

Jimmy howled and leaped from the bed, squaring off at his heartless disturber.

"Come on! Try that again and see how far you get," he challenged, though the last words were rather muffled, owing to a pillow thrown by Joe which stopped his breath.

Herb grinned amicably.

"I wouldn't fight you, Doughnuts—not before breakfast. Get a move on and jump into your clothes. If you're good, we'll let you go with us treasure hunting."

That magic word was enough to bring a predatory gleam even into Jimmy's sleepy eyes.

"Righto!" he cried, pulling on his shoes and lacing them up in a hurry. "I'll be with you in a minute."

Their breakfast consisted of much the same ingredients as the supper the night before, with some rashers of bacon added. But the boys paid little attention to what they ate in their eagerness to be off to explore the island. Mr. Fordice had already told them that he would be busy and that for a while he would have to leave them to themselves.

It was Bob who suggested that they erect their radio sets before doing anything else.

"No one knows when we may need them," he

pointed out. "Anyway, it will be fun to listen to a concert from the mainland tonight. I noticed from the program yesterday that those new Spanish singers were going to sing from WEAF, and I don't want to miss anything that those birds get off."

"Right you are!" acceded Joe. "We may even be able to pick up something fairly decent this afternoon. Let's get to work. Herb and I will set up the antennae, and you and Jimmy assemble the parts of the sets and see that the batteries are in good working order."

They all set to with a will, and for the next two hours were as busy as beavers. They were so expert in the matter by this time that they knew exactly what to do. Even Jimmy, who was faintly disappointed that they were not to set off at once in search of treasure, soon became as engrossed as the rest in the fascinating work.

At last it seemed to be completed, and the boys gathered around to get their first communication on the island from the outside world. But to their surprise and chagrin, Bob, who was attending to the tuning in, could get no reception from WEAF.

"Perhaps there's nothing on the air just now," suggested Jimmy. "We may be a bit too early."

"No," returned Bob, consulting his watch, "it's

quarter past eleven now, and they have a program to-day between eleven and twelve. There must be something wrong with our setting up. Now leave it to old Doctor Layton and he'll find where the trouble is."

"He hates himself, doesn't he?" chaffed Herb.

"All the quacks talk that way," grinned Jimmy.

"Clip the next fellow in the jaw that says a word, Joe," commanded Bob, as he pursued his investigations. "I can't be bothered by nit-wits."

First he looked over the antenna system, tracing it through the tuning inductances to the ground connection. Then he traced the secondary circuit of the receiver from the grid connections on the tube bases to the filaments, making sure that there were no loose connections with the switches, binding posts, or movable tuning elements.

"Seems to be all right there," muttered Bob. "The trouble must be somewhere else."

The filaments, too, proved to be in good shape. They lighted properly and to full brilliancy.

"Right as wheat," pronounced Bob perplexedly.

"Old Doctor Layton seems to be a little bit rattled," grinned Herb.

"Remember what I told you, Joe, about that clip in the jaw," admonished Bob. "Ah, here it is! The plug wasn't making a good contact

with the jack. I knew I'd get it if I only stuck long enough. Now let's see what's on the air."

The boys listened eagerly and caught the voice of a chef broadcasting his latest recipe for walnut cream cake.

"Shut that off, or Jimmy'll be having a fit," laughed Herb. "Can't you just taste that walnut cake, Doughnuts?"

"My imagination's good, but not that good," grumbled Jimmy. "It only tantalizes me. Come on, fellows, let's get another station."

"Not now," protested Herb. "We know now that the receiving set's in good working order and that's enough. We can't expect anything good until later on. I vote we have a look at the island, and the quicker the better."

The suggestion met with the approval of all. Coming upon Mr. Fordice, apparently unengaged, they asked him to go with them; but he refused on the ground that he wanted to prowl around on his own account and see if he could make head or tail of the recent mysterious happenings.

"You go ahead and don't think about me," he suggested. "Only don't do your scouting too openly, and whatever you do don't get lost."

The boys laughed at the idea of getting lost in so small a place.

"All we'd have to do would be to follow the shore line back to the house," Joe pointed out.

"Just the same, there might be times when you'd prefer a shorter route," observed Mr. Fordice, and the Radio Boys thought he looked at them rather anxiously. "Be cautious, boys, until we've solved the mystery of Joe Brown," he added. "I don't want you to poke your heads into trouble. If you see anything that looks suspicious, keep your distance. Come back to report to me, and we'll together decide what to do."

The boys promised, with little idea of how hard it might be to keep that promise in the adventurous days to come.

The stone house in which they were staying was at the extreme north end of the island. From its door was a gently shelving beach leading down to the sheltered inlet where they had left their motor boat after the tumultuous passage from the mainland.

On either side of this inlet the shores were high and rocky, and the boys looked with a reminiscent tingling upon the rocks that had seemed to mean their undoing the night before.

"What a snug little cove," Joe said, as they stood on the beach throwing pebbles into the quiet waters of the inlet.

"A regular miniature harbor," agreed Bob.

"Just the kind that Zinc-Tooth used to pick out

when he landed for fresh water," put in Jimmy dreamily.

"Jimmy's got Zinc-Tooth on the brain," gibed Joe.

"More likely water on the brain," amended Herb. "He has all the symptoms of that dreadful disease. But come along, fellows. We can see all of this we want from our bedroom windows. Let's strike out for the other end of the island."

"What shall we do, follow the coast line or cut through the woods?" asked Bob, as they climbed the slope to the house again.

"I think perhaps we'd better keep to the woods," suggested Joe. "We promised Mr. Fordice we wouldn't show ourselves any more than was necessary until we'd solved the mystery of the island, and a good thick wood is the best place I know of in which to keep under cover."

"All right, then, the woods it is," agreed Bob.

The woods began only a little way from the house, for which they formed a screen from prying eyes at the south. The boys plunged into it with the feeling of adventurers on the quest for a new world. What lay on the further side of that patch of woodland was still to be revealed. Was it untenanted? Or would they, like Robinson Crusoe, discover footprints—or even some-

thing still more tangible—that would disclose the presence of intruders?

In some places the undergrowth was so thick, the vines so dense and intertwined, that they had all they could do to force their way through.

"This sure is the forest primeval," panted Jimmy, as the boys threw themselves down on the ground for a few minutes' rest. "I bet there are caves in this woods, good deep caves, if we only knew where to look for them."

"Or graves with the skull and crossbones carved on a slab to mark the place where old Zinc-Tooth buried some of his men, so that they wouldn't be able to tell where he'd hidden his loot," added Herb, grinning.

Once they were reminded of Mr. Fordice's warning not to lose their way. That was when they actually did lose themselves among the heavy trees and thick undergrowth, and were only set on the right track again by the aid of Bob's pocket compass. But at last they came to the edge of the woods, and paused behind a protective screen of trees to take a survey of the open space beyond.

If they had expected, perhaps hoped, to see some signs of human habitation there, they seemed doomed to disappointment.

At the extreme end of a long expanse of sand were some old fishing huts, squatted on the beach

not far from the water's edge. They were weatherbeaten and betrayed every sign of desertion and decay. Above them soared and screamed seagulls, their cries blending with the roar of the surf. But of human figures there was not a trace!

No smoke came from the old stovepipes thrust through the roofs that acted as chimneys. Nor were there any boats drawn up on the beach. As far as the boys could note, they might as well have been on some lonely island in the South Pacific.

"I wonder if those old huts are as deserted as they look," muttered Joe.

"I think it's safe to take a chance," replied Bob. "Come on. We'll soon find out."

CHAPTER XIII

OVER THE CLIFF

To MAKE assurance doubly sure, the Radio Boys waited for a few minutes. Then they left the shelter of the trees and moved down cautiously toward the huts along the shore. Their hearts beat fast and their nerves were tingling, for though they felt certain nobody was there, they rather expected to come across some traces of lawless intruders.

A quick glance inside of one after another showed that no one was in the huts. Furthermore, they had been deserted apparently for some time. The walls were bending in, the roofs sagged crazily.

As they passed from one to the other, the boys felt disappointed, and vaguely injured besides, like those who had expected to see a good show and learned at the last moment that the company of players had left town.

Only the last of the huts gave some signs that it might have been occupied at a time not long

past. There were some empty cans scattered about, and the stove looked as though a fire had been made in it rather recently.

"But that doesn't prove anything," remarked Joe Atwood. "I suppose yachting parties may often land on the island and have lunch here."

"Likely enough," agreed Herb. "One thing is certain. If there's anything in Mr. Fordice's notion of smugglers, they've sure made themselves mighty scarce to-day."

"Perhaps they know they haven't succeeded in scaring us off the island and are lying in wait somewhere watching us," was Jimmy's suggestion.

Though the other boys laughed at this, there was something uncomfortable about the idea. An open enemy was one thing, a hidden one quite another.

After poking about the huts some time longer, in the vague hope of finding some hiding place where the smugglers, if such there were, might have stored their contraband goods, the boys moved on along the coast, keeping rather close to the shore line.

The sun that at first had given promise of a glorious day, was now hidden by heavy clouds, and a mist had descended, covering land and sea alike with a dense, white shroud.

"Not a good day for exploring," Herb grum-

bled, as he looked out to sea, trying vainly to pierce the mist. "Can't see more than five feet before your face."

"Which reminds me that we'd better watch our step," put in Bob. "The good old compass will get us back to the north end of the island all right, but we don't know the shore line, and we're apt to step off a cliff, first thing we know."

"The land's almost level with the sea here," Jimmy protested.

"It was," replied Bob. "But I've noticed that we've been climbing pretty steadily for the last few minutes. You remember all the central part of the island is high. I wonder when we're going to stumble upon those woods again," he added.

"Stumble is right," grunted Herb. "That's about the best thing I do. Who ever heard of a fog like this coming down on you out of a clear sky!"

"A cloud running low bumped us," grinned Jimmy.

"Sudden fogs aren't unusual so close to the water as we are," observed Joe. "But I must say they're mighty inconvenient."

"Especially when you're looking for smugglers," remarked Jimmy. "Funny we didn't catch any sight of them, if they're really about.

You'd think that at least they'd leave a sentry to watch."

"Maybe Mr. Fordice's idea was a frost," Herb suggested. "Perhaps Joe Brown did want to get the island for a summer resort, just as he said."

"Maybe," agreed Bob. "Though if that were so, why should he warn Mr. Fordice to keep away from it? Resort proprietors don't act that way toward possible guests."

"There you go again with the why," snorted Joe, kicking vindictively at a shrub as he passed. "I'll tell the world it's all a dark deep mystery."

"Maybe not such a mystery after all, if anybody but me'd take the trouble to use his old bean," said Jimmy, with the air of one who had no need to guess but already knew everything. "It seems as clear as daylight to me."

"Clear as mud!" scoffed Herb. "Listen to him talk!"

"Let him rave," chimed in Joe. "What's on your mind now, old-timer?"

"Well, then, it's the treasure." Jimmy delivered himself of this bit of wisdom as though in that one brief sentence he had told all and need explain no further.

The other boys proved of a different mind.

"Old Zinc-Tooth has made him nutty," de-

clared Herb. Throw him over the cliff and end his suffering."

"A good cold souse might do him good," Joe agreed.

But Bob interposed.

"Not so fast, you fellows," he objected. "I see Doughnuts' point, and it's not bad."

"Good, you'd better say!" snorted Jimmy. "Mighty good!"

"Jimmy thinks the hidden money is at the bottom of the whole thing," explained Bob, warming to the idea the more he considered it. Herb and Joe continued to stare at Bob Layton dubiously. "He thinks that maybe Joe Brown and his confederates have heard of the treasure—"

"Have got hold of a map," Jimmy interjected eagerly, "and want to warn everybody off the island so that they can have a clear field in searching for it!"

"It isn't impossible that there is a map," remarked Bob thoughtfully. "The old man would have been likely to have made some record for those who came after him, in case of his own sudden death, and Joe Brown may have got hold of it."

"But it would have been mighty funny if his own family hadn't found the map long before this," Joe objected.

"The old man might have meant to tell them, but waited too long," suggested Jimmy. "He might have died of a stroke or something like that. And if his folks looked for it afterward they might not have been able to find it. Some one else, though, might have stumbled on it by accident."

"Of course," returned Joe dubiously, "anything might happen—"

"And lots of funny things do happen all the time," declared Jimmy. "I don't care what you say, you old gloom hound! I bet there's money hidden somewhere on this old island, and I'm going to do my best to find it!"

The Radio Boys went on quietly for some time after that, feeling their way through the fog and ruminating on what Jimmy had said. The theory at least was interesting, and after all not so far-fetched, when one came to think it over.

Mr. Fordice had spoken of the possibility of money having been hidden on the island, although he had spoken of it as a legend rather than as a fact.

Still, it might be a fact, and somebody else might know of it. Was it possible that the supposed smugglers were only treasure hunters? That at least would be more legitimate.

If there was any money at all, it was likely

to be considerable, for Mr. Fordice had said that his ancestor was regarded as a "very rich man," and the boys did not stop to consider that, in this part of the world, at least, a rich man in the time of Mr. Fordice's great-great-grandfather would not be counted as very wealthy to-day.

But the thought put a keener edge on the boys' own desire to look for the treasure. It would be aggravating, to say the least, to have a fortune carried off from under their very noses.

"We might as well look over the old house a bit ourselves," remarked Joe Atwood, and Jimmy flashed a look of triumph because of the apparent conversion of the chief skeptic. "We've got all the time there is, and we might come across something worth while."

As Joe spoke, he felt a stone slide from under his foot. He slipped, struggled to regain his footing, and then felt suddenly as though the ground had opened beneath him.

Wildly he flung out his hands for some support and grasped only air!

CHAPTER XIV

BY A HAIR'S-BREADTH

THE disappearance of Joe Atwood came about so quickly that only his shout of dismay roused the other boys to his danger.

Bob sprang to the edge of the steep cliff over which his chum had slipped, striving desperately to pierce the heavy, enfolding mist.

"Joe! Joe! Where are you?" he cried.

Jimmy, perilously balancing on the edge of the slippery rock, almost fell after Joe, and was pulled back by Herb's hand on his collar.

"Let me go! We've got to get down there after him!" cried Jimmy frantically.

"Wait a minute!" commanded Bob fiercely.

From somewhere below Joe's voice came up to them, muffled by the fog.

"I'm here! Hurry up, fellows! I can't hold on long!"

In a flash the boys realized what had happened.

Confused by the fog and their ignorance of the shore line, they had come out on a projection

of the island which jutted into the sea. Joe had simply walked over the edge of the precipice. They must have followed, had they not been warned by Joe's shout of alarm.

"Hang on, Joe!" Bob shouted down to him. "Hold on for your life! We'll get to you some way."

Down below there, clinging to the jagged edge of a great rock, Joe fought for a toehold beneath him and clenched his teeth.

"I've got to hold on," he told himself. "Just one slip, and I'm gone. Listen to those waves!"

The combers broke angrily at the foot of the rocks, reaching up at him with their hissing fingers of spray as though they would drag him down to destruction. They seemed but a few feet beneath him. Joe knew if he slipped again, those hungry waters would close over him and dash him ruthlessly against the surface of the cliff.

He glanced down at the sheer descent and shivered. The sensation of slipping was upon him. He could feel the slimy stone gliding under his hands. Then, just as he felt that his doom was certain, that nothing could stop his final plunge into the seething whirlpool at the base of the rocks, his clawing fingers caught in a crevice of the rocks; caught and held.

It was only temporary relief. He could not

hold on long. The rock was like glass from the spray, his fingers were numb, his muscles, bruised by the fall, ached cruelly.

If he could only find a toehold in the rock, so that he could rest and regain his strength, he might be able to climb up again. But a glance above him dispelled that wild hope. The cliff seemed sheer. He might as well try to scale a perpendicular wall.

No hope there. His numbed fingers were losing their grip. But what was this?

Feeling about desperately, his foot slipped into an opening in the rocks. By resting on it cautiously, he could relieve the strain on his aching fingers.

Would the fellows be able to get help to him? Could they reach him in time?

After that first cry of his he had not answered their encouraging shouts, except at intervals to let them know he was still there. He was forced to save his breath, to give all his strength to that frantic clinging.

They would try to help him. They would do their best. But after all, what could they do? They had no rope. There was no one to whom they could run for help except Mr. Fordice at the old stone house, and by the time they returned from there it would be too late.

Too late!

A monster wave came roaring in, flinging itself violently against the barrier of rock, drenching Joe with the spray.

It made the rock still more slippery. It would be impossible for his almost paralyzed fingers to hold on much longer. Already they had almost lost their sense of feeling. There was a roaring in his ears and a dullness before his eyes as though a gray curtain had been lowered between him and the light.

It seemed as though the hissing waters were actually swirling about his feet. This then must be the end. In another moment he would be plunging downward. He could almost feel the frothing waves closing over his head.

"Joe! Joe! Old boy!"

The words cut into Joe's consciousness like the slash of a whip. The gray curtain lifted from before his eyes, as he stared upward.

There was Bob, sprawled against the surface of the rock just above, hand outstretched toward him.

How did he get there? What was holding him? In a flash Joe knew.

The boys had made a human chain and come for him, risking their own lives to save his. Somewhere up in the fog were those other brave comrades, each holding to the other, the one on top clutching to something solid, a tree trunk

perhaps, that would sustain the weight of them all.

On Bob's face was a look that Joe never forgot. For Bob's hand, outstretched to the utmost, fell just an inch or two short of Joe's fingers, holding to the crevice in the rock.

Just an inch or two! Only that much between life and almost certain death!

"Joe," cried Bob in agony, "see if you can't reach me. Try, old boy. It's got to be done!"

Nothing but desperation could have lent Joe the strength to do it. He thought that he was exhausted, all in, and he was almost that. But now he summoned his last reserve of nerve and muscle.

"Bob," he cried in a harsh strained voice, "I'm going to jump for it. I'll probably miss, but I'm going to try. Ready?"

"Yes!" cried Bob, and braced himself.

Joe tensed his muscles, dug his foot in to give him purchase, and flung himself upward.

For a sickening moment he thought that he had missed.

No! Bob's fingers closed about his wrist like a ring of steel.

For a moment Joe's body swung out into the void, imposing a fearful strain on Bob and the other boys. But any one of them would have died rather than let go.

"All right, Jimmy," gasped Bob. "I've got him. Haul away."

Jimmy, at the top, had secured himself by his belt to a stout young sapling. With this as a leverage, he pulled upward with all his strength, the others lightening the load wherever possible by gripping with their free hands at every protuberance of the cliff.

It was like a nightmare, and they would never have made the ascent had not the cliff sloped in toward the top. This proved their salvation. Inch by inch they wriggled their way up, and as they reached the sloping face, rested one by one and drew air into their lungs for fresh effort.

At last up came Joe, good old Joe, and lay on the ground at full length, unable for a time to speak or move, plucked literally from the jaws of death!

CHAPTER XV

THROUGH THE TRAPDOOR

FOR a long time the four Radio Boys lay sprawled out in silence, exhausted by their tremendous efforts, but filled with a sense of thanksgiving for which there were no words.

It was Jimmy who first found breath enough to speak.

"Say, Joe, what were you trying to do?" he asked. "Couldn't you choose a better place than this for making a dive?"

Joe grinned feebly.

"It was a close call, Doughnuts. I hate to think how near I came to ending my swimming days altogether."

"Don't think of it," adjured Bob. "All right now, old boy?"

"Fine," answered Joe, as he rose gamely but rather totteringly to his feet. "I sure owe you fellows more than I can ever pay. You saved my life."

"Those not born to be drowned are born to

be hanged, so look out for the rope," jested Herb, more to conceal his emotion than to try to be funny.

In fact, they were all so profoundly stirred by what had so nearly become a tragedy that they spoke but little on the way to the old stone house.

"Guess we'd better strike into the woods this time," Bob suggested. "Something tells me that there are safer places than this coast line in a heavy mist."

"Right you are," Joe agreed. "I'm willing to stick to the woods till I know this place better."

After what seemed to them a long time of feeling their way through the enshrouding mist, they finally reached their temporary home.

They found Mr. Fordice waiting for them rather anxiously.

"I was afraid that perhaps you had lost your way and got into trouble," he said, as he greeted them. "This is about the heaviest fog I've ever known in the history of Signal Island."

It was then that Joe related to him the details of his terrible experience, dwelling, to the great embarrassment of his chums, on the gallant part they had played in his rescue.

The boys had developed a ravenous appetite and besieged the pantry for food. And while they were engaged in consuming large quantities

of tuna fish and bread and butter, Mr. Fordice listened with interest to their account of their visit to the south end of the island.

"I rather expected you would find something out of the ordinary myself," he said, when the boys expressed wonder that so little sign of occupation had been discovered in the vicinity of the fishing huts. "However, that one trip is not to my mind conclusive. Smugglers or gentry of that type are apt to cover up their tracks pretty skillfully. I still have a hunch that sooner or later we'll hear or see more of Joe Brown or his gang."

"Night's the most likely time," suggested Bob. "Perhaps in the dark of the moon we'll have better luck."

The fog showed no signs of lifting, and the Radio Boys decided that they would follow Jimmy's suggestion and see what was behind the trapdoor in the closet where they had stored their radio sets over night.

"Let old Zinc-Tooth lead the way," gibed Herb. "Through Jimmy, the pirate speaks. What does he say, old boy?"

"He says first of all to stow the gab and get busy," replied Jimmy. "Who knows where there's a ladder?"

A short search revealed one in the cellar, and it was promptly carried up to the closet.

"Fine!" pronounced Bob. "Just fits. Who goes up first?"

"Wish it on Zinc," chuckled Herb. "I bet what we'll find will be a large assortment of cobwebs and rats."

"All right. But if I'm to be the leader of this expedition, I get three-fourths of the loot, and you swabs can divide the rest," declared Jimmy, striking a pose that he thought would befit any pirate chief. "I want that to be understood before we start."

"Oh, you do, do you?" cried Herb. "Out, varlet!" and he rudely plucked Jimmy from the lowest rung of the ladder.

With a flying leap, Bob reached the third rung and started to climb. Joe followed, with Herb at his heels. Poor Jimmy was left to strike his pose without an audience and follow at the tail of the procession.

Bob lifted the heavy trapdoor with considerable difficulty. But it was not bolted on the other side, and yielded under pressure. Bob slung his leg over the flooring and pulled himself erect. The others followed quickly and stood together in the dusty, cobweb-filled place.

It was dark inside, for there was only one window far up in the wall, and this let in but little of the fog-doomed light. There were a couple of barrels, a box and a trunk, but these

were covered with layers of dust as though they had not been opened for a generation.

Something flashed from the far corner of the room with a scratching of scurrying feet and disappeared in a hole under the ancient flooring.

"There's your rat, Jimmy," chuckled Herb. "I was right about the cobwebs, too. That's all there seems to be here."

"We haven't looked yet," retorted Jimmy, and immediately began a systematic exploration of the place.

They moved the box, the barrels and the trunk, after examining their contents and disturbing a cloud of dust and entangling themselves in innumerable silken webs, that brushed across their faces with the stealthy touch of ghostly fingers. They inspected every inch of the floor and walls. But they could find no trace of any hiding place that could possibly contain the will or any other document of the great-great-grandfather of Mr. Fordice.

"Zinc-Tooth slipped a cog this time," remarked the grinning Herb. "What do you suppose that old pirate would suggest under these circumstances, Jimmy?"

"That we keep on looking," replied Jimmy sturdily. "This isn't the only place to search, you know. There's the cellar and the attic—"

"And the back yard too," added Bob, with

a laugh. "Seems to me this is pretty much like looking for a needle in a haystack. Now if we only had some clue—"

"A map, for instance," interpolated Jimmy eagerly. "That's just what I said."

"Old Doughnuts will be looking for the green cheese in the moon next," chaffed Herb. "Come on, fellows, we're only wasting our time here."

The boys reluctantly left the queer little room that could be reached only by the trapdoor and seemed to have no connection with any other part of the house. Though the others laughed at Jimmy and his conviction that he would yet find the buried Fordice "fortune," there was an enticing air of mystery about the little, isolated, musty storeroom, and each one of the boys made a secret resolution to return to the place at some future time and subject it to a still more rigorous examination.

But they had had all the hunting that they cared for at that particular time. All except Jimmy. He was still for continuing the search down into the cellar, up into the attic, and out into the back yard, if necessary. But his comrades wanted to tune in on Bob's radio, and as usual the majority ruled.

They caught an interesting lecture and concert broadcast from WJZ and enjoyed it to the full. Mr. Fordice too listened in and his pleasure,

if possible, surpassed theirs. He knew but little about the technical part of the science, but he had all the enthusiasm of the new convert.

"I never paid much attention to it before the flood visited our place," he remarked. "I thought it was more or less of a fad that would run its course and die out like other fads. But since your knowledge of it saved our town I've felt a sense of personal gratitude to it, and I think now it's one of the most wonderful inventions in the history of the world."

"You're dead right!" affirmed Bob emphatically. "There's nothing that can be compared to it. Why, if one started in to tell all that it's done, he could talk all day and all night and not get to the end of it. As you say, it saved Bottville hundreds of thousands in property and scores of lives. But that's only a single instance. Look at the ships it has saved with the hundreds of passengers and crews! Look at the towns it has saved by timely warning of forest fires! In countless cases it's brought help and salvation. It's independent of telephone and telegraph wires. They may be down, but the good old radio keeps working all the time. It can talk to voyagers up in the arctic zone. It can talk to explorers in the center of Africa. It can talk to airships up in the sky. It can send a message around the world in less time than it takes to strike a match.

Australia can talk to America as I'm talking to you now."

"And it can surely make you eloquent," remarked Mr. Fordice, with a genial smile.

"It would make a dumb man eloquent," declared Bob a little extravagantly. "And it isn't a theory in our case, but actual experience. Our own people would have died if it hadn't been for the radio when we were at Ocean Point. They'd almost have died of heartbreak if we hadn't been able to tell them that we were safe that time we were on the Iceberg Patrol. And what should we have done without radio when we were trapped in the forest fires? If any one ought to be grateful to radio, it's ourselves."

"Right you are," agreed Mr. Fordice. "And what you've said touches only upon a part of what the wonderful science has done for the world. It's a wonderfully great educator. It brings lectures by the brightest minds on important subjects to hundreds of thousands who have been denied the advantages of a systematic education—talks on books, on natural history, on science, on the different countries of the world, their people, their habits, and their customs. It has raised the level of popular taste by bringing the greatest and loveliest music of the world to millions who have never been inside the walls of an opera house. It has brought the people into

closer contact with their government, as they have heard talks by the President, governors of states, and members of the cabinet. Is has relieved the loneliness of farms. It has opened a new world for the blind. And that isn't a half of it, a tenth of it, a hundredth of it! Oh, I agree with you boys that it's a miracle."

"Who's eloquent now?" asked Bob mischievously.

"Well, didn't you say it would make a dumb man eloquent?" laughed Mr. Fordice. "But I wish I knew as much about the technical side of it as you boys do. It makes me envious to see the way you handle your sets, the unerring way in which you get to the bottom of any trouble."

"That's largely a matter of practice," replied Joe. "Anything we know you're welcome to. All the fellows will agree with me there. You've got a good chance to get used to radio, now that you're here with nothing else to do, and there's no reason why you shouldn't become a dabster at it."

"The worst of it is," chimed in Herb, "that there are so many things you have to learn all the time. You just think you've learned something about tubes and regenerators and such things when some gazabo turns up with a new invention or improvement on an old one, and you have to do your learning all over again."

"It's a tough world," sighed Jimmy, "but we have to do the best we can." His tone was so lugubrious that the others all laughed.

Now they caught a special talk on forest fires broadcast from WEAF. This was of especial interest to the boys because of their own thrilling experience. The capsheaf was a lovely violin solo that made them catch their breath as the notes rose and sank like the melody of angels.

"Gee, that was great!" exclaimed Herb, as the program came to an end.

"Might almost think we were back in good old Clintonia," observed Joe.

"Instead of on a desert island in the midst of smugglers and pirates and mysteries," put in Jimmy.

"The radio may be good for sending as well as receiving before we get through with this same desert island," affirmed Bob.

Although the words were spoken laughingly, they held a note of prophecy which the boys were to remember later on.

The fog had lifted the next morning when they woke, and the sun held promise of a glorious day.

"Here's for some fun!" cried Bob. "What do you say we go for a swim, fellows?"

"A swim has it," agreed Joe. "But this time

we'll choose the right place for it," he added, with rueful recollection of the day before.

They decided not to take their swim in the protected inlet near the house, since that would probably prove too tame and their young blood craved adventure. Besides, they wanted to see more of the island than the fog had permitted on the previous day.

Mr. Fordice remained at home to write letters and to experiment with the radio set, with which he was now deeply fascinated, and gave them a half promise that he would join them later on.

This time the boys skirted the west shore of the island, looking for a pleasant spot for their projected swim. They found a little cove with a shelving beach suited to their purpose. They got out of their clothes quickly and then, in their bathing suits, raced for the water.

"Gee, this is the life!" cried Herb, as he plunged under a great, green, incoming comber and came up sputtering on the other side. "Race you for that wreck over there."

CHAPTER XVI

AN UGLY CUSTOMER

HERB FENNINGTON pointed to a black hulk that rose and fell with the waves not more than two hundred yards from shore. Whether it was actually a wreck or just a drifting craft the boys could not tell from that distance. But their curiosity was aroused and the others answered Herb's suggestion with an enthusiastic yell.

Though the challenger had a head start in the race, Bob overtook him before he had gone half the distance.

"Now look to your laurels!" he cried, as he drew alongside of Herb. "I'm going to give you the race of your life."

It was a pretty race, with Bob and Herb neck and neck and Joe cleaving along about ten feet behind. Poor Doughnuts, panting and puffing like a sea porpoise, was compelled to take their dust, or rather their spray, glad to be in the running at all.

In the last hundred feet Joe made up the dis-

tance between him and Bob, and Herb fell a little behind. The result was that Bob and Joe reached their destination at exactly the same second, with Herb only an arm's length in the rear.

"Jimmy, as usual, you're an 'also ran,' " shouted Herb to his chum.

"But pretty near a tie for us three," laughed Bob. "What is this thing we've come to, anyway?" he asked, examining the derelict more closely.

"It's a wreck, all right," declared Herb. "Let's get aboard."

This they did without difficulty, as the craft lay low in the water. They found themselves on the dingy, decaying deck of a type of boat unknown to the boys. It had evidently once had sails, but these had long since vanished from the masts, leaving only a few dirty tattered shreds of cloth to show where they had been.

There was a little auxiliary engine, they found on further examination, but this had been rendered useless by damp and rust.

"Look! Here's an anchor chain!" cried Bob, going to the stern of the vessel. "I wonder whether there's an anchor on the end of it."

He gave the chain a sharp tug. There was a rusty clanking noise and the wheel on which the chain was wound turned slowly. Bob was lean-

ing over the low stern rail, and the releasing of the chain threw him off his balance.

With a startled cry he found himself plunging headlong into a sea of writhing, green water that seemed to rise up to receive him.

"Bob's overboard!" yelled Joe, and rushed to the rail, with Herb and Jimmy at his heels.

They could see the swirl of the water where their chum had disappeared. But Bob did not reappear immediately, as they had expected. The lad was a strong swimmer, and they knew that nothing but actual force could keep him under water more than a few seconds at a time.

Joe leaped to the rail, and the next moment his body cut the air in a clean arrow-like dive.

"Watch out and haul us in, fellows!" he cried as he dived. "We may need it!"

Meanwhile, beneath the surface of the water, Bob was fighting with an enemy as hideous and ruthless as any sea monster of fable or legend.

As he fell overboard he became entangled in the loosened anchor chain, and the thing clung to him like the tentacles of an octopus. One coil of it was about his legs, another about his waist, another about his shoulders.

He wriggled free of the band about his ankles, only to find himself caught by an arm, loosened the grip of the chain about his shoulders only to feel it slip about his neck and tighten there.

What little breath he had was going, his head seemed to grow to the size of a balloon, his eyes were bulging from their sockets, his strength was leaving him, he could struggle but feebly. He would die there, caught in the anchor chain, drowned like a rat in a trap!

What was that? Some one was tugging at the chain! No use—too late—no chance—

Joe was working rapidly. He got the chain unwound from Bob's neck.

Another shadow in the water—and another. Bob's glazing eyes could barely perceive them. Hands tugged desperately at the chain. Some one was holding him up—some one was dragging that crushing coil from his waist to his knees—lower yet—

Bob felt this just as his tortured lungs gave way and let in the flood of water that gagged and choked him.

His head was above the water. The blessed air was pouring into his lungs, a familiar voice was in his ear:

"All right, Bob, old boy. Take it easy. You're all right."

It was Joe speaking, and Bob was vaguely conscious that Herb was on the other side and that between them he was being rapidly brought toward shore.

Bob felt dizzy and weak. He tried to strike

out, but found that his legs hung like leaden weights, as heavy as the chain that had just been around them.

"Don't try to work, Bob," admonished Joe. "We can get to shore easily."

So Bob relaxed and felt himself borne along without any effort on his part. The salt air revived him and he finally became able to distinguish the blue of the sky overhead from the green of the tossing waves about them.

Then came shallow water and the feel of the sand underfoot. Bob tried to shake off the hands on his arms and walk unassisted, but Herb and Joe continued to help him up on the dry beach, where he sank down gratefully.

"How are you feeling?" asked Joe anxiously.

"Slightly disfigured but still in the ring, thanks to you fellows," panted Bob. "Where's Jimmy?"

"Oh, tagging along as usual," answered Herb.

"He tagged to some purpose a little while ago," declared Joe warmly. "If he hadn't helped we'd never have been able to get you away from the coils of that anchor chain. It was twisting around you like a snake. You were certainly wound up in it good and proper, old boy."

Just then Jimmy came in to shore, puffing and blowing and very red in the face from his exertions.

Bob tried to thank him as he had the other

boys, but Jimmy made light of it and turned the subject to weather conditions.

"Looks as though we might get wet," he said, pointing to a great cloud that was sailing up from the east and threatening to obscure the sun.

"If you can show us how we're going to get any wetter than we are now, you're good," returned Herb. "What's the matter if rain does fall on us? It'll be only an exchange of fresh water for salt."

"Still, there's no use in having to lug home a bundle of wet clothes," put in Joe, regarding the various articles of clothing that had been flung on the beach. "Besides, there's a pretty stiff breeze springing up. What do you say to legging it for shelter until the storm blows over?"

"There isn't going to be any storm," pronounced Herb, with the air of an oracle.

But just then a shower of drops came down, to be followed quickly by more.

"There isn't, eh?" jeered Jimmy. "Well, I don't know what you fellows are going to do, but little Jimmy is going to get his clothes on and drift away from here."

They had brought towels along, and with the aid of these they were soon reasonably dry, and then they slipped into their clothes. They had little time to spare, for now the rain was begin-

ning to come down in earnest, driven by spiteful gusts of wind.

"Better make for the huts on the south end of the island," Bob suggested. "They're nearer than the stone house, and maybe we can find a place for another swim later. I feel as if I had been cheated out of this one."

"I should think you'd had enough swimming for one day," commented Joe, as they followed Bob's suggestion and ran for the huts. "Gee, Bob, when I found out how you were trussed up in that anchor chain I thought you were a goner for sure!"

"So did I," confessed Bob. "It would have taken a wizard to get out of that mess alone."

They had reached the southernmost end of the wooded portion of the island and were about to round the fringe of trees that screened the fishing huts from view when a man stepped from behind the shelter of a tree and confronted them.

The boys stopped in their headlong pace, not so much because of the man as because of that which he held in his hand. It was a gun, an ugly one, and the muzzle was pointed toward them!

CHAPTER XVII

THE MUZZLE OF THE GUN

"WHAT are you fellers doing here?" growled the man behind the gun.

"Trying to get out of the rain," answered Bob, recovering his voice. "Any objections?"

"You bet I got an objection, bo." The man took a threatening step forward and his eyes under lowering brows were as ugly as the gun he held in his hand. "You keep to your end of the island and keep there pretty close, or you'll be sorry. Understand?"

"Whose island is it—yours?" asked Joe, his hot temper beginning to rise.

The man turned on him ferociously.

"You git out o' here!" he snarled. "I'm goin' to count three, an' if you ain't out of here by then, I'll let you have some of this where it'll do the most good," and he waved his sawed-off shotgun. "Now you mind what I'm tellin' you. Git!"

The boys could hardly argue with the gun.

They saw the wisdom of retreat. But to leave the fellow there in full possession of the south end of Signal Island was one of the hardest things they had ever done.

It was raining hard by this time, and the Radio Boys sought the doubtful shelter of the woods. It was a long tramp to the stone house, and they were soaked through when they reached there.

They burst into the house, full of their subject and eager to tell their host about it, but Mr. Fordice was nowhere to be seen. They searched every room for him, calling him by name, and when he failed to answer they became somewhat alarmed. It was Bob who finally discovered a note in Mr. Fordice's handwriting standing propped up against the radio receiving set, where he had supposed they would be most likely to find it.

"Listen to this, fellows," cried Bob as he read the message:

"Must leave island in a great hurry. Received news by radio that my girls have been hurt in an automobile accident. Will return as soon as possible. Meanwhile be on your guard. Flash red light twice and blue light four times if you want motor boat from shore. Be cau-

tious in all you do and take no unnecessary chances until I return."

"Now what do you think of that?" exclaimed Herb, when Bob had finished reading.

"It's too bad," said Bob sympathetically. "I hope the girls are not badly hurt, both for their own sake and that of their father."

"So do I," put in Joe.

"Well, now that we're monarchs of all we survey—" began Bob.

"Except at the south end of the island," commented Herb dryly.

"I accept the correction," went on Bob. "The question is, now that we're on our own, what ought we to do? How about it, fellows?"

"Stay here, of course," declared Joe. "We don't want to go away from Signal Island just when things are getting interesting, do we?"

"We do not!" agreed Herb emphatically. "We'll stick it out and solve this mystery, if it takes a leg."

"I suppose," observed Jimmy thoughtfully, "that our folks would say the wisest thing to do would be to go to the mainland and wait there until Mr. Fordice gets back. We don't own the island, you know, and we may get into serious trouble if we're found nosing around."

"What's the matter, Doughnuts?" queried Herb. "Getting cold feet?"

"Not on your life," returned Jimmy, scowling at the taunt. "I was just thinking what would be the wisest thing to do so that I could do the opposite."

There was a general laugh at this.

"All right, old timer," chuckled Bob. "You've got us all with you. We'll stick till the last gun's fired."

"Unless those rascals have cats' eyes, they can't see us in the dark," ruminated Joe. "I move that we go down there to-night. There isn't any moon now, and we can see without being seen. That is, if there's anything to be seen. They may have cleared out by that time."

The suggestion met with general approval, for the boys were wrought up to a high pitch following the adventure of the morning. It was with difficulty they could restrain their impatience till the darkness gathered.

The weather proved friendly to their undertaking, for though the rain had ceased the sky was still overcast enough to render the night darker than usual and so minimize the danger of discovery.

Like shadows, the boys stole through the thickest part of the woods, only the occasional

flash of an electric torch upon their compass serving to keep them in the right direction.

When they had almost reached the outermost fringe of trees, Bob gripped Joe's arm and brought him to a standstill.

"Look!" he whispered, his voice shaking with excitement. "Those lights out at sea!"

Herb and Jimmy had come up in time to hear the last of Bob's agitated whisper.

The eyes of the others followed the direction of Bob's pointing finger.

There, at some distance from the shore, flashing at irregular intervals, were two lights, one red and one blue.

"Signals!" muttered Joe.

"Careful!" warned Bob. "Keep your voice low. We're on dangerous ground."

"Smugglers!" whispered Herb. "Then our suspicions were right after all! Gee, can't we move a little closer?"

He was moving forward impetuously, his eyes on those mysterious lights, when Joe clutched him by the arm.

"Keep still!" he cautioned. "Look! Over there! More lights from shore!"

The boys crowded closer together, their hearts beating high. There on the little stretch of beach close to the fishing huts other red and blue lights,

alternating with each other, were answering the signals from the water.

"Can't we get closer, Bob?" urged Jimmy. "Something tells me we'll see something good."

"And something perhaps not so good," replied Bob. "Remember the man with the gun. Better sit tight and not spoil it all by letting them know they're being watched."

"I'd hate to be caught at the job myself," muttered Joe. "I have a hunch that we'd find ourselves in a pretty pickle if they nabbed us. Those fellows are desperate, and a life or two more or less doesn't mean much to them, I imagine."

"They've stopped signaling," whispered Herb. "I wonder what happens next."

A long wait ensued, during which the boys could hear the sound of muffled voices down on the beach. After what seemed an age, the soft putt-putting of a motor boat came to them over the water.

"They're putting in to shore," muttered Jimmy. "Gee, I wish I could see what they look like!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

THE Radio Boys watched and listened with bated breath as the motor boat drew nearer to Signal Island.

It stopped at some distance off the beach and evidently lowered a boat, for the boys could catch the faint sound of oars in the rowlocks and get the dim outline of some small craft approaching the shore.

For a time there seemed to be an animated conversation going on between the men who had been on the beach and the newcomers, but the word had evidently been passed for caution, for no intelligible word reached the eager watchers.

The boys had expected to see heavy cases and barrels carried ashore. But there was no sight nor sound that indicated this. The muffled talk ceased after a while, the small boat moved off, and again the putt-putt of the motor boat, growing fainter all the time, showed that it was receding. Then the shadowy figures of those left on the

beach gradually drifted away in the direction of the fishing huts.

The boys expected to see lights presently spring out from these. But all remained shrouded in darkness.

"Either they're mighty early bed-goers or they've had a tip to douse the glim," muttered Joe.

"I guess the party's over for the night," murmured Jimmy, in a disappointed tone. "It's all off, fellows—let's go home."

"Better make as little noise as possible about it, too," warned Joe. "I'd hate to meet that fellow with the gun just now."

The wisdom of this suggestion was proved a moment later when the boys heard the scratching of a match, and in the flare that came from it, as a pipe was lighted, caught sight of a man patroling the beach. They could not tell from that distance whether it was the man they had seen in the morning, but they could plainly catch the outline of a gun in his hand.

"You see they're on the watch," whispered Bob. "Don't make any more noise than ghosts."

The four lads moved with the stealth of Indians, and it was not until they had put a safe distance between themselves and that dangerous spot that they ventured to speak again. Even

then they whispered, as though the very night had ears.

"We probably didn't search the fishermen's huts well enough, or we might have come across their stuff," observed Bob, still in an undertone.

"Or perhaps there's a cave somewhere back in the woods where they hide their smuggled stuff," Herb added.

"You seem to be pretty sure they're smugglers," put in Jimmy, and there was a suggestion of superiority in his tone.

"Rum-runners, of course," answered Herb. "What do you think they are?"

"Treasure hunters," pronounced Jimmy in a sepulchral tone, such as he imagined old Zinc-Tooth was accustomed to use.

"Officer, he's crazy again," gibed Herb. "What do you suppose they were doing with those signals if they were after treasure?"

"Signaling maybe that they'd found the spot where it was buried or perhaps come across a map," replied Jimmy, who held to his convictions like a terrier to a rat.

And jeer as they would, the other boys could not shake Jimmy from his stand. At bottom, too, they were not sure but that he was right, the more so because of the absence of the casks and barrels that are associated with rum-running.

It was decidedly lonely coming back to the dark

house and not having Mr. Fordice there to greet them. They would have given a lot to have him with them, now that something had developed. It seemed doubly unfortunate that he should have been called away just at this time.

For he was a man, accustomed to deal with men, and having the moral strength that went with ownership of the island. They themselves had no more title to it than the desperadoes at the south end. Their right, of course, to be there was greater, because they were invited guests of the owner, while the beach men were trespassers. But such distinctions would count but little with the men with whom they might have to deal.

Then, too, they had no weapons. They knew that Mr. Fordice had brought a revolver with him. But in his haste and agitation he had probably taken it with him, as careful search failed to reveal it.

Still, they were husky and courageous and they had been in tight places before and had come out of them, owing to their habit of standing loyally together. So they strove to banish uneasiness, got a hearty meal before retiring, and took care that all the doors and windows were tightly barred against intrusion.

They were kept awake a part of the night by a strong wind from the sea that howled fiercely around the old house and filled the darkness with

strange noises. They were glad when day dawned and nothing serious had happened.

The house had apparently not been watched. There were no footprints of prowlers in the damp soil. They had seen no one lurking among the trees at the rear of the house nor on the sands of the inlet, and they gathered from this that the man with the gun was satisfied that he had scared them sufficiently and that they would take his advice and thenceforth stay at their end of the island.

"They've got another guess coming, if that's their idea," remarked Bob.

"It's just as well they should think they have us buffaloed," declared Joe. "It will throw them off their guard and make it easier for us to shadow them."

"But it's up to us to walk as if each pebble were an egg," pronounced Jimmy sagely, as he took a doughnut from his pocket and sank his teeth into it.

Herb dived for Jimmy's pocket, but the latter instead of dodging stood quietly while Herb searched in vain.

"Fooled this time," grinned Jimmy. "This is the very last. Yum-yum, how good it tastes!" and he rubbed his stomach tantalizingly.

"Where does he get them all?" queried Bob

wonderingly. "He seems to pick them out of the air."

"You crooks forgot to search my suitcase," Jimmy chuckled. "Mother made four dozen for me before I left."

"And they've been here all this time, and we never knew it!" groaned Herb.

"You're a hard-boiled egg, Jimmy," said Joe reproachfully.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature," returned Jimmy, as he swallowed the last crumb. "You fellows can live on anything. But it's only doughnuts that help me keep my strength."

After the boys had finished breakfast they held a consultation. They were keyed up for any adventure, and not one of them thought of renouncing the attempt to clear up the mystery, though they all agreed that it was necessary to exercise the greatest caution.

Once or twice one or another of them glanced at the radio set, as if anxious to tune in on something and see if it was still in working order. But the mystery of the south end of Signal Island was uppermost in their minds, and they could not for long think of anything else.

They were pretty familiar by this time with the general contour of the island. They knew that the coast line was ragged and marked by numerous indentations, that the shores were armored for

the most part with rock and presented few opportunities for the landing of any craft. Only at the northern and southern points of the island could a boat make shore with safety.

The northern point could be dismissed from consideration, for that was within plain view of the old stone house, and even the audacity of the smugglers would not take such risks as that. The lads were fairly positive, therefore, that the only spot it was necessary for them to watch was that southern patch of sandy beach, with its sprinkling of dilapidated huts.

Having determined that to their satisfaction, they lost no time in setting out toward the spot where they had witnessed the mysterious scenes of the night before. They made their way toward it cautiously, scarcely daring to breathe.

They hardly knew what they expected to find. A fleet of motor boats perhaps in this natural harbor. A band of scowling-browed rum-runners dragging their illicit goods toward a hiding place. Or, if Jimmy's theory were correct, a group of adventurers, picks in hand, starting out to dig up a buried treasure.

What they found was a place as deserted, apparently, as it had been on the day they had first seen it.

"It may not be as deserted as it looks," warned Bob in a whisper. "Better go cautiously—"

"If at all," put in Herb. "Look out for the man with the gun."

"I tell you what let's do," suggested Bob. "I'll go on ahead as a sort of advance scout—"

"And if you don't get shot dead in your tracks, the rest of us will follow," said Jimmy sarcastically. "Is that right?"

"Nothing doing," declared Joe. "Where one goes all will go. How about it, fellows?"

"You bet!" chimed Herb and Jimmy in chorus. "Let's go!"

But they did not go.

Just as they prepared to leave the shelter of the trees, two men came out of one of the cabins and sauntered along the beach.

The sensible thing for the boys to have done at that moment was to retreat. But they were far too interested to do the sensible thing. They waited, well hidden behind the thick undergrowth of the woods for the men to pass.

What was their amazement when the men did not pass, but turned when they were almost opposite the boys' place of concealment and came straight toward them!

CHAPTER XIX

THE SECRET DRAWER

At first the Radio Boys thought that they had been discovered. But in a moment Bob saw by the engrossed conversation of the men and their slow pace that they had no suspicion of interlopers.

A minute more, however, and the men would be upon them.

A few steps in the rear was a giant boulder. Toward this the eyes of the boys turned with one accord.

As silently as might be, the boys tiptoed to this insecure hiding place and threw themselves flat behind it, trusting to the heavy undergrowth near it to furnish a screen.

The men entered the woods nearly at the spot where the boys had been standing a moment before. They were talking together in low, gruff voices.

"I tell you we're runnin' a chance in not cleanin' out that stone house at the north end," the

boys heard one of the men say. "It's a big risk leavin' them boys run around loose."

"Rats!" his companion retorted. "Nuthin' but a city feller if he does own the island and put on airs, an' a passel of kids. They'll get tired of the island in a few days an' go back to the mainland. We don't want to raise no rumpus if we can help it. In our business we don't need no press agent."

"Shut up!" snapped his companion roughly, and glanced uneasily about him. "Cut out talk of our business. I've a half notion them kids may be watchin' us now. Smart kids and fresh they is, an' I wouldn't take no chances with 'em."

The two men passed on, the sound of their footsteps dying away in the woods. Only after they were definitely gone and the danger passed could the boys see the humor of the situation.

"Thought them kids was watching them now, did he?" chuckled Herb. "He didn't know the half of it."

"Smart kids and fresh they is," mimicked Jimmy.

"Just the same, we'd better watch our step," said Bob, as they struck off at an angle into the woods, so as to avoid any possible encounter with the men. "Those fellows are tough customers, if I ever saw any."

"And they didn't look like treasure hunters,

either," remarked Herb, with a side glance at Jimmy.

"I don't know how you get that way," said the latter, instantly accepting the challenge. "How do you expect treasure hunters to look? Do you suppose they're going to be dudes with stiff collars and high hats? And besides," he added, with an air of triumph as of one clinching an argument, "didn't they say their business didn't need any press agent?"

"Neither does the rum-running business," retorted Herb. "Did you ever think of that?"

"Doesn't it? How do they get their customers?"

"Quit your squabbling," admonished Bob. "Either one of you may be right or wrong. But I'd certainly give a good deal to know just what those ginks are up to."

But it seemed as though the boys were destined to get no light on that matter for some time to come. Although for several days thereafter they visited cautiously the south end of the island, they found nothing new to stimulate their interest or satisfy their curiosity.

Two times a week the motor boat from the mainland brought over fresh eggs, butter, milk, and vegetables, with which the boys supplemented the stock of staples they had on hand. On one of these occasions it brought also the new electric

light bulbs that Mr. Fordice had ordered to replace those that had been removed, presumably by some mischievous members of a boating party.

"Gee, I'm glad to get these," remarked Joe, as he took them out of their container. "It'll brighten the old place up. Those oil lamps give me the willies."

He screwed one of the bulbs in its socket, but was surprised to see that there was no answering flash.

"That's funny," he remarked. "Guess that bulb must be defective. I'll try another."

Though he tested several in succession, it was with equal lack of result.

"Try another socket," suggested Bob. "The wire in that one may have become disconnected."

To their chagrin, however, the boys were not able to get a light anywhere in the house.

"Wouldn't that get your goat?" exclaimed Herb in disgust.

"The only explanation is that there isn't any current," declared Bob. "The rascals that removed the bulbs must have cut the wire somewhere. If that isn't a case of malicious mischief, I'd like to know what is."

"That's tough," put in Joe. "It not only robs us of the light but of the juice we need to recharge our batteries. Storage batteries won't last forever."

"Well, there's nothing left for us to do but to find where the wire was cut and fasten the ends together again," concluded Bob.

"That makes three hunts we have on hand now," observed Jimmy, "one for the treasure, one for the smugglers, and one for the electric light wire."

"Yes," assented Bob. "But I guess the hunt for the broken wire will be the easiest one of all."

It proved, however, to be by no means easy. The lads searched for hours, and at last caught sight of the dangling ends in a remote part of the cellar. They fastened them together and then hurried upstairs to test the lights. To their delight they found that everything worked perfectly.

"That's a good job well done," pronounced Joe.

"Yes," agreed Bob, "not only for the lights but for the battteries. I'd hate to have to send a message and find that I hadn't sufficient juice. I'm going to connect the current with the battery of the sending set right now so that it will be fully charged. Then we'll be on Easy Street."

He was as good as his word, and did not cut off the current until he was convinced that the battery had all it could carry. Meanwhile the

others saw to it that the aerials and other wires were in first-class condition.

More days passed, and the Radio Boys did not even catch a glimpse of the two men who had passed so close to them in the woods, one of whom they had recognized as their former acquaintance of the shotgun. Signal Island seemed completely deserted again by all but themselves, and if it had not been for their vivid recollection of the night when they had seen the signals flashed from sea and land they might almost have persuaded themselves that they had dreamed the whole thing.

"I wonder why Mr. Fordice doesn't come back," fretted Jimmy, wandering restlessly from one room to the other of the old house.

"One would think he'd write," said Herb.

"If the girls were very seriously injured he'd probably think of nothing else for a while," ventured Joe.

Over a week had now elapsed since their host had taken his sudden departure, and all the boys were beginning to feel that the accident that had called him away had proved a serious one.

Their restlessness was increased on that particular morning by the fact that the rain was falling in a steady, monotonous downpour that made life in the open out of the question. The wind

roamed eerily about the house, and from the shore came the sullen thunder of the surf.

"Maybe Mr. Fordice isn't coming back," grumbled Herb, who was in a mood that morning to take the worst view of everything.

"Sure thing he'll come back," declared Bob. "If he weren't coming, he'd let us know—by radio if in no other way—no matter how upset he was, and ask us to join him."

"Bob's right," chimed in Joe. "I think we can expect to see him 'most any time now."

"I had my heart set on going fishing to-day," growled Herb, eyeing the rain disgustedly. "We haven't even tried out our fishing tackle."

"Well, I guess we can count that out for to-day," remarked Bob. "We'll have to find something to do inside."

"Where are you going, my pretty maid?" called Herb, stopping Jimmy as the latter neared the door.

Jimmy grinned rather sheepishly.

"Treasure hunting," he responded, and disappeared.

The boys looked at each other with a touch of scorn in their glance, but followed Jimmy, nevertheless.

They found him in the dark, damp cellar, examining a rusty spade and pickaxe.

For the life of them, Jimmy's chums could not

help catching his excitement. There was something in the sight of that old spade and pickaxe that suddenly made the reputed buried fortune of that Fordice ancestor a real and tangible thing.

"Where are you going to start?" asked Herb.

"Right here in the cellar and work my way up to the attic," replied Jimmy. "And if by the time I'm through I haven't found that treasure, I'll say there ain't no such animal—in the house, anyway."

"And after that we'll begin in the back yard," laughed Bob. "All right, Doughnuts, hand me the pick."

They spent a couple of hours taking turns in digging up the dirt floor of the cellar, but without results. Then, after having sounded the walls thoroughly for a possible cavity and finding none, they ascended to the first floor.

There was nothing in the commonplace rooms there to suggest a hiding place for treasure. Nevertheless, they searched thoroughly, feeling up the chimney, even pulling up a loose board in the kitchen.

"Nothing doing here," said Herb at last reluctantly. "On and up, fellow adventurers! There are still more worlds to conquer—or try to."

But the second floor proved quite as disappointing as the first. The boys were beginning to feel

that if great-great-grandfather Fordice had indeed hidden his money in the old house, he had proved too clever for them.

"Only the attic left," declared Jimmy, in a tone that showed that his sanguine hopes were beginning to glimmer feebly.

The lads climbed the steep stairs with Bob in advance. As Jimmy clambered up after him, he was thrust ahead by the impatient Herb, and stumbled, falling heavily against Bob. Bob, on his part, plunged forward, striking his foot heavily against the wall.

Suddenly Joe gave a shout that drew the startled attention of them all.

"Look!" he cried wildly. "A drawer! A secret drawer!"

CHAPTER XX

A STARTLING DISCOVERY

THE Radio Boys stared with rounded eyes. Out of the solid wall—or so it seemed—a small drawer was slowly emerging.

"H—how?" stammered Joe. "Wh—where did it come from?"

Bob was looking at that part of the wall against which he had stubbed his foot.

"Fellows, I've got it!" he cried. "I'll bet this is a spring!"

The boys bent over him as he knelt on the floor examining what seemed to be a knot in the wood. In reality, they found it to be a cleverly arranged wooden button, which, when pressed, released the spring of the secret drawer.

"It was just an accident!" cried Herb. "If you hadn't stumbled against the wall we'd never have found it."

"But what's in the drawer?" asked Jimmy, as he peered into the mysterious receptacle that had appeared as though by magic.

"Hey, not so fast there!"

His comrades were at his elbow, jostling Jimmy to get their own look at the contents of the drawer. Jimmy gave a cry, and thrust his hand into the opening.

When he drew his hand out there was something in it that crackled like old and brittle paper.

The boys regarded that bit of yellowed and mildewed parchment with interest.

"A map!" cried Jimmy shrilly, and his voice shook. "Now, what did I tell you?"

"Let's see it," demanded Bob.

He took the paper gingerly, for it seemed old and fragile and he feared that a rough touch would ruin it.

The other boys crowded close to him, trying to make out the lines and figures on the map by the light of the one small window high up in the wall.

"What do you think it is, Bob?" asked Joe eagerly. "Do you think it's a real map?"

"It's a map, all right, though it's just about impossible to tell what's on it in this dim light," replied Bob. "Come on downstairs where we can see it better."

"Better close the drawer," suggested Herb.

"Here's a chance to see if the spring works both ways." At the words Joe bent down and

touched the "knot" in the wall. The drawer slid back as slowly and easily as it had opened. To all appearance there was nothing but the blank wall before them.

"Pretty clever," said Bob admiringly. "We'd never have found this in a thousand years if I hadn't just happened to stumble against it."

"I wonder if great-great-grandfather Fordice put it there himself," mused Joe.

"Of course he did!" affirmed Jimmy. "That foxy old boy knew how to keep a secret. He couldn't have told even the members of his family about it, or they'd have found it long ago."

"No doubt he meant to tell them about it before he died, but he kept his secret too long," surmised Bob. "Death came along and found him napping. But now come on."

The boys descended the ladder more quickly than they had gone up, eager for a better sight of that mysterious, faded scrap of paper that they had stumbled upon so unexpectedly.

Bob took it to the light, and there they strained their eyes over the faint markings.

"Better get a fresh piece of paper," Joe suggested, "and as we make out a line on the map we'll put one like it on our paper, so as to get a duplicate."

"Good idea," approved Bob. "This thing looks as though it might fall to pieces any minute."

The task was a harder one than the Radio Boys had anticipated. They worked over it for a long time without thought of food or rest.

In some places the tracing was so faint that they studied for many minutes before they transcribed it, and even then, in many cases, they were not sure that they had it correctly.

"At the best, we're guessing a lot," remarked Jimmy, when they had finished and were studying the result with a mixture of triumph and doubt.

"The only thing that seems to be real clear is this square-linked iron chain," said Bob, wrinkling his brows. "Though what that means or where it leads to doesn't seem to be explained. But now follow me," and he began to trace certain lines with his pencil and read aloud the figures on the duplicate map. "Here's what he calls Bulldog Rock in the center—"

"And how we're going to find that, no one knows, since there are about six million rocks on this island," remarked Herb pessimistically.

"Well, probably this rock bears a certain resemblance to a bulldog, or it wouldn't be called that," Bob pointed out. "And there certainly are not six million rocks on this island that look like a bulldog."

"Yes, yes, come on," urged Joe impatiently. "Then this line going off at right angles to the rock and marked 10 p—"

"That's probably ten paces," Bob conjectured. "And the second line going off at right angles to the first is marked 13 p—again, I suppose, paces."

"Then at the end of that line comes a black spot like a blot or a rock or a hole or anything else you choose to guess," put in Jimmy, "and there he leaves us without another word. I must say, the old man might have made the map a little clearer."

"Perhaps he made the map only for himself, to remind him of the exact spot," hazarded Herb.

"In that case we're lucky to get as much information as we have," observed Bob.

"I wish we could make out these marks along the edge of the paper," murmured Jimmy. "That might give us a clue to the place where we could find the rock that looks like a bulldog."

"Well, we can't make them out, so there's no use wishing," declared Herb. "I guess we'll have to find Bulldog Rock by ourselves, and if we can't the show's all off."

With what meager indications they had, the Radio Boys were eager to set off at once on their search. But they were amazed to find how time had flown in their study of the map. Dusk was already gathering and the treasure hunt would have to be put off till the morrow.

Early the next morning they set off, with pick and spade and the new map, the original having been returned for safety to the secret drawer.

So excited were they over the treasure that they had almost forgotten the criminal intruders on the island. Their one object in life at the moment was the discovery of a rock that bore some resemblance to a bulldog.

As Herb had said, there were so many rocks on the island that their task promised to be no easy one. But their blood was heated and they were ready for any amount of work, however arduous.

"We'd better do the job right, while we're about it," Bob suggested. "We'll start at the house and work right across the island, examining every rock as we go. We'll keep going back and forth until we've seen every one if necessary."

"That's the way to talk," approved Joe. "Let no guilty rock escape."

"All right," agreed Herb. "Let's go."

"I don't believe the old boy would have buried his money too close to the old house," speculated Jimmy, after they had examined innumerable rocks and found them wanting. "That's where the pirates, if they came, would look first. I think we'll probably find Bulldog Rock near the center of the island."

"If we find it at all," put in Herb, on whose natural indolence any kind of sustained work always had its prompt effect. "Perhaps the old man was a joker and was trying to have his fun in advance at the thought of kidding along any one who should find the map and think it meant something."

He should have wilted at the look of scorn that Jimmy threw at him, but Herb was hardened and simply grinned amiably in reply.

Two hours of unremitting work found the lads somewhere near the center of the island. They were tired, and stretched themselves out on the grass to rest in the vicinity of a rock that did not look in the least like a bulldog.

"If I look for that bulldog much longer, I'll be barking myself," remarked Herb.

Suddenly Jimmy sat up straight and pointed toward the ocean.

"Look!" he cried. "There's a motor boat heading in toward the island!"

CHAPTER XXI

A QUEER BOATLOAD

At Jimmy's exclamation all weariness vanished, and the boys leaped to their feet as though actuated by springs.

"Two of them," corrected Herb. "There's another coming from the opposite direction."

"And both heading for the island," commented Bob. "Now, is that just chance or are they meeting by appointment?"

"Something's going to happen that I bet will be interesting!" exclaimed Joe. "Come on, let's get a little nearer to the scene of action."

The boys passed swiftly down the coast, taking care to keep well within the shelter of the trees. They did not approach the southern end of the island too closely, but chose a spot on the crest of a small knoll from which they could see perfectly and yet could not be seen.

One of the motor boats reached the island sooner than the other, and the boys saw several men get out of it. Joe thought that they were

negroes, but a closer inspection proved them to be men, probably foreigners, of dark complexion and indeterminate nationality.

"What do you know about that?" murmured Herb under his breath. "What's it all about, anyway?"

"The other boat's coming in," said Bob. "Perhaps that will help to clear up the mystery."

If the boys had seen casks or cases transferred from one to the other of the two boats, they would not have been surprised. It would simply have confirmed the suspicions they had long entertained that bootlegging was the illicit trade in which the intruders on the island were engaged. But nothing of the sort happened.

There was some delay and a good deal of parleying between the groups from the two boats, and eventually the dark-complexioned men entered the second motor boat and the craft put off from shore. The other boat tarried for a time and then left swiftly in a different direction. Before long it had vanished from sight.

"Look! There comes another boat!" cried Herb suddenly.

"Looks like a United States Revenue Cutter, too," commented Bob.

"It is! It's flying the flag!" Joe almost yelled in his excitement. "Now we ought to see some fun."

One of the suspicious craft, the one to which the dark-skinned men had been transferred, was still in sight of the boys, though it was rapidly rounding a rocky part of the island that would serve to lose it to view.

"If the cutter sees it, there ought to be something doing!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Gee, how I'd like to see a chase!"

But either the cutter had not noticed the motor boat at all or, if it had, had seen nothing suspicious about it. At any rate, it kept on its way and soon was a mere bobbing dot on the water.

"Pretty slick for the motor boat," grumbled Herb disgustedly. "If I'd been in command of that cutter, I'd have given the rum-runners a run for their money."

"Rum-runners I guess is right," murmured Bob thoughtfully. "But they didn't transfer any cases of whiskey aboard the boat or to the shore, that's one sure thing."

"I suppose they wait till night for that," conjectured Joe. "Those fellows may have met today just to make arrangements for landing their goods later on."

"I wonder where all those dark-skinned guys came from," pondered Jimmy.

"You can search me," replied Herb slangily.

He swung idly at a boulder with his pick and

stood aghast at the result. The stone had rolled away easily and disclosed a gaping hole beneath!

Herb was on his knees in an instant, hand groping in the hole. There was a queer look on his face.

"Fellows, there's something down here!" he said. "Hand me the spade."

In a moment the others were as excited as he himself. The motor boats were forgotten and the thought of treasure was uppermost. Had they stumbled at last on the Fordice fortune?

Herb dug frantically with the spade. For once he was willing to work.

"Go to it, old boy!" cried Jimmy dancing around wildly.

The first spadefuls were of twigs and sand. The former seemed to have been burned, and some were of the consistency of charcoal. Then followed a number of clamshells.

"That's camouflage!" exclaimed Jimmy. "The old man put some of them there so as to fool any one who might come across the hiding place accidently. Keep at it, Herb! When you get tired the rest of us will take a hand."

But Herb was unwilling to relinquish the honor of finding the treasure first, and kept on untiringly, the perspiration running down his face in streams.

Up and up came the shells, a myriad of them,

so it seemed. On and on Herb worked, spurred by his own excitement and that of his mates.

But the treasure still eluded the searchers, and finally their hopes began to wane. They vanished utterly when Herb got the last clamshell out of the hole and found that the aperture extended no further. He tapped the back and the sides with his spade. They were solid!

With a snort of disgust Herb clambered out of the hole and wiped his streaming brow.

"Sold, by jimminy!" he groaned. "All that work for nothing!"

His comrades were quite as disappointed as himself, but as they were not so exhausted they could see something of the humor of the situation.

"Some folks have been having a clambake here and cleared up the litter by stuffing in that hole," declared Joe.

"And that explains the burned wood," put in Bob.

"We never thought to look at the rock," added Jimmy, going round to the other side to get a good view of it. "Huh! nothing of the bulldog about that," he snorted. "Looks more like a dachshund, if you ask me. Talk about saps! We're the prize boobs!"

"It's one on us, all right," agreed Bob.

"There's one good thing about it, though," said the grinning Joe. "It gave the rest of us a

chance to see Herb work. I never thought I'd see it! Herb, the horny-handed clam-digger! Herb, the noble son of toil!"

"Oh, can it!" pleaded Herb, grinning with the rest.

"What about getting along, fellows?" suggested Bob. "We still have a chance of finding that bulldog before dark."

"Not for me!" replied Herb. "I'm no dog fancier. You fellows go ahead and give me a chance to catch my breath. I feel as though I'd been run through a threshing machine."

"The first day is the hardest," consoled Joe. "If I were you, I'd keep it right up. By the time you've been digging clamshells for a week you'll be feeling fine."

Herb glowered at him, but eventually yielded to the urging of his chums and accompanied them on their further search.

But a bulldog seemed to be the scarcest of all the rocky animals on Signal Island, and though they kept on till dusk began to gather, their hunt proved fruitless, and they had to give it up for the day.

A dip in the sea and the comforting supper that followed restored them to their usual spirits, and they were as fresh as ever when they gathered about the radio that night to see what they could pick out of the air that was unusually good.

They were fortunate in getting some fine opera selections from WJZ and an interesting talk from the governor of a state over WOR. They then switched to WEAF and were just in time to hear the announcer state that a veteran secret service man would narrate some of his experiences with smugglers.

"Smugglers!" exclaimed Joe. "That's just our meat!"

"Perhaps we'll get a tip that'll explain some of the doings at the south end of the island and those ships of mystery we saw to-day," chimed in Jimmy.

" 'Ships of mystery!' Gee, Jimmy, how do you get that way?" protested Herb.

Bob laughed, but he took Jimmy's part.

"Those are boats of mystery, whatever you say, and I, for one, would like to find out what they're about."

They were all soon engrossed in the speaker's words. The official was an interesting talker and full of reminiscences based on his own personal experiences. He touched on a wide range of topics, and revealed a wealth of ingenuity on the part of various kinds of lawbreakers that astonished the boys beyond measure.

"Gee, those rascals are there with the think-tanks, all right!" murmured Jimmy.

"They're cunning, but they're not wise," put

in Bob. "If they were wise, they wouldn't be crooks. A crook is a fool. The wise man knows that he can't fight law and order and get away with it. The crook hasn't sense enough to know that, and sooner or later he's brought up with a round turn."

From smuggling of diamonds and dresses and the like to evade the customs duties, the speaker turned to bootlegging. This was of special interest to the boys, for they felt that rum-running was the special problem with which they had to deal.

But the matter had already been so fully discussed in the newspapers that the boys were fairly familiar with its different phases, and they learned little that was new from that part of the address.

They gleaned more information from the talk on the smuggling of drugs and narcotics. Again they were amazed at the various devices used for carrying on that illicit trade. In a sense, it was easier than rum-running, for the goods, opium and the like, were so small in bulk that they could be the more easily concealed—in the legs of chairs, the soles of shoes, the lining of safes, all sorts of unlikely places.

"Well, I guess he's covered about everything," remarked Jimmy, as the speaker paused for a moment.

Bob motioned for silence.

"Listen," he said. "Here's something else."

"There is one other kind of smuggling," the speaker resumed, "that is not quite so well known, but is immensely profitable. As most of you know, our Government has recently passed drastic laws to keep out undesirable immigrants. Each country has its quota of immigrants that can come in each year, and that quota cannot be exceeded. But many more are eager to come than can be admitted. Some would be debarred, anyway, because of crime, ignorance, or disease.

"But whatever the reason, there are many who are willing to pay five hundred, a thousand dollars, sometimes more, to get into America by hook or crook. So a profitable business has sprung up of smuggling them into the country. Some are brought over the border from Canada, others from Cuba or some other island of the West Indies. Fast boats convey them here, land them, sometimes on islands and later convey them to the mainland. Men from southern Europe, dark, swarthy."

Bob sprang from his chair.

CHAPTER XXII

CAPTURED

"I've got it!" cried Bob. "I've got it!"

"Got what?" queried Herb. "The jimjams?"

"I've got the explanation of the mystery boats!" Bob fairly shouted. "Don't you see? That's what those roughnecks have been doing down at the south end of the island! Swarthy men of southern Europe! Remember how dark-complexioned those foreigners were? Those fellows are smuggling them into the United States!"

"By George, I believe you're right!" declared Joe, now in the same state of excitement as his chum. "That explains the absence of the cases and barrels of liquors that we thought so strange."

"And all this time we've been taking those guys for rum-runners!" exclaimed Herb.

"All except Jimmy," remarked Joe, with a sidewise glance at Doughnuts. "How about your treasure hunters now, old scout?"

Jimmy at last was shaken, and his looks confessed it.

"Looks to me as though Bob may be right," he admitted. "Although of course we've got to prove it," he added.

"That blessed old radio!" exulted Bob, giving an affectionate pat to the set. "Here's once more it's scored for us. If we hadn't caught this talk to-night, we'd be still groping about on a blind trail."

"Well, assuming Bob is right, the question is what to do next," observed Joe.

"How I wish Mr. Fordice were here to consult with us!" said Herb. "He'd know the best way to go about seeing that these fellows get what's coming to them."

"I suppose by rights we ought to get in touch with the federal officers," put in Jimmy.

"Yes," agreed Bob. "But we don't want to be too hasty about it. We're only supposing this, and while it seems probable we're right, we haven't anything in the way of actual proof. I vote that we keep watch on those fellows until we catch them dead to rights. Then we'll call the radio into use and notify the coast-guard men."

"Bob's right," declared Joe emphatically. "We don't want to make ourselves laughing stocks by

being too cocksure on nothing. We want to get those criminals red-handed."

"But how are we going to do it?" asked Jimmy.

"By setting watch on them," replied Bob. "It'll probably make us lose a lot of sleep, but we can snooze in the daytime to make up for it. Probably the night's the time they land their biggest cargoes. To be sure, we saw a few of them in the daytime, but they were probably left-overs from a previous batch. How about it, fellows?"

The others agreed enthusiastically. They were all worked up to a high pitch of excitement at the prospect of a stirring adventure.

They were not blind to the fact that they ran a good deal of danger. If their conjecture were right, they would be dealing with desperate men —men who would not hesitate to kill if their liberty depended upon it. The secret service man in his talk had narrated an incident where, in order to destroy the evidence, the crew of the smugglers' boat had killed and thrown overboard a group of Chinamen when their vessel was in danger of being overhauled by a pursuing revenue cutter. Nor was the ugly gun in the hands of the sentry they had met out of the boys' minds.

But the spice of danger made the adventure

all the more attractive. They had had narrow escapes before, and had gained confidence in their luck.

They would have felt better, to be sure, if they had had some weapons to serve them for defense in case of need. But they would have to make up for the lack of these by alertness and agility and quick wit, in case the smugglers awoke to the fact that their proceedings were being watched.

"Let's get on the job at once," suggested Bob. "That is, if Herb isn't too tired after his work with the clamshells."

"Count me in," replied Herb, rising and slipping on his coat. "This will be a kind of work more to my liking."

Joe and Jimmy were equally eager, and the boys slipped out of the house like shadows, employing unusual precautions to avoid detection in case the building were watched.

They were so familiar with the island by this time that they had little difficulty in finding their way to the other end, although the night was as dark as Egypt.

They reached their destination without mishap, and ensconced themselves behind the trees near the beach.

But what they saw that night was nothing, except the phosphorescence from the waves.

What they heard was less. No light shone from any of the cabins, and there was no sound of footsteps. Either the lawless users of the beach were absent for the time, or they were so confident of immunity that they kept no watch.

"No use of all us fellows losing sleep," suggested Bob, after an hour had passed. "Three of us can snooze while one of us keeps watch. If anything happens, the others can be waked up with a touch."

This seemed eminently sensible, and they adopted it, arranging that each should take a two hours' turn. It was not the first night that they had slept in the open, and they adapted themselves to the situation like old campaigners.

But that night was, as Herb expressed it, "a dud." Nothing happened, and they returned to the house at daybreak, their spirits a little dashed by their fruitless endeavors.

But they were clear grit, and having once made up their minds that they were on the right trail they stuck to it with the tenacity of hounds on the scent, giving up for the time being their search for the Bulldog Rock. On the fourth night of their vigil that tenacity was rewarded.

It was about midnight that Bob, who was on watch, nudged his sleeping companions. They were awake on the instant.

"Something doing, fellows," Bob whispered.

"I can see the lights of a big vessel a little way out from shore, and if you'll listen, you'll hear the putt-putt of a motor boat. I'll bet they're landing a cargo."

A few minutes later they could discern the outline of the motor boat approaching the shore. It stopped a few rods away. Then came the sound of oars, and soon a rowboat crowded with men grated on the shelving beach.

Other men emerged from the cabins with lanterns carefully shaded on the side nearest the mainland, so that they scarcely seemed more than the twinkling of fireflies and yet furnished sufficient light to enable the men to see what they were doing.

By this dim illumination, the boys could see that batches of men were being herded like cattle into the fishing cabins by the men who were directing things.

Other boat loads followed until the cabins were no longer sufficient for them, and they squatted on the beach in groups, jabbering together in a foreign language that the boys could not understand, but which, from the intonations, they thought might be Italian.

"This must be one of their big nights," whispered Joe excitedly. "Look at the gang they've rounded up."

"Yes," replied Bob, in the same low tone.

"And probably," he added, "every one of them will be gone before morning, transferred by other boats to the mainland. Now's the time to nab the smugglers. Let's beat it for the house. We'll call up the authorities and they'll notify one or more of the coast-guard cutters. Hustle's the word."

The boys rose to their feet and started for the north end of the island. But they had not got more than twenty feet before a gruff voice commanded:

"Stop!"

The cry was echoed by other voices, and from half a dozen different directions flashlights were turned upon them.

The truth came upon the lads with a shock. A cordon of men had formed in the woods behind them, not because they knew the boys were there, but to keep watch for possible intruders.

Bob's mind worked fast. If they kept together, they would be rounded up. If they separated, they had a chance of bewildering and evading their would-be captors.

"Scatter, fellows!" he shouted, and set the example by darting off to the right, his comrades following suit in various directions.

Two men closed in on Bob as he ran. He dodged one, but the other got directly in front of him Bob lowered his head and plunged into

him, catching him full in the pit of the stomach.

The man went down with a grunt, the breath completely knocked out of him.

Bob managed to regain his balance, and with no one else in front of him, put on his utmost speed. He heard footsteps and shouts behind him, but his clumsy pursuers were no match for him and they soon gave over the chase.

A little later he heard quick steps over to the left. None of the heavily built men, he was convinced, could run like that.

He gave the hoot of an owl, a signal the boys had often used when separated in the woods. Another hoot answered him. He made his way toward the sound, and soon he and Joe were together.

"Seen anything of the others?" panted Bob.

"No," gasped Joe. "But then we're the faster runners. They may be coming. Let's give the signal."

They hooted several times at intervals. There was no answer.

The two boys looked at each other in dismay. There could be but one explanation.

Jimmy and Herb had been captured!

CHAPTER XXIII

TO THE RESCUE

"WHAT shall we do?" asked Joe, in agonized tones.

"Just this," replied Bob. "There's no use going back at the moment. The smugglers are on the alert now, and we'd only make two more prisoners for them. We've got to leg it to the house, notify the authorities, and tell them to send help at once. Thank goodness, the battery is fully charged. While I do that, you get the lantern and bring some one over from the mainland in the motor boat. You remember the signal, two red lights and four blue ones. Keep on using those till you get an answer. Then, when we've got things started, we'll go back to the south end and try to get Herb and Jimmy out of their fix."

The two boys put off like the wind for the house. Joe got the lantern and went out on the beach, where he started at once to signal. Bob seated himself at the radio and sent out his story

through the ether. In terse urgent words he emphasized the need for instant help.

The message was caught up in a dozen places, including WNY, the municipal radio station of New York City, which relayed it at once to the Custom House. In a few minutes Bob began to receive replies which assured him that orders had been flashed to all the coast-guard cutters and that aid would be despatched as soon as humanly possible.

In the meanwhile, Joe had received answering signals from the mainland, and in a few minutes more the motor boat came over. It was in charge of a boatman to whom Mr. Fordice had consigned that task in case of being signaled from the island.

In a few hurried words Bob explained the situation, told of what he had already done and sent the boatman back with direction to get, if possible, a posse of volunteers. In the event of not being able to do that, he was to hold himself in readiness to bring over to the island any federal officer who might be dispatched to the spot.

"Now," said Bob to Joe, after the man had departed, "we've done all we can for the present. Here's for Herb and Jimmy!"

And if any boys ever needed help at that moment, Herb and Jimmy were those boys!

The luck that had stood their companions in good stead had been lacking in their case.

They had started to run at Bob's command to scatter. Herb dodged two men who sought to intercept him, and might have got through, if a third man had not flashed a light straight into his eyes. This blinded the lad for a moment, and he came up hard against a tree trunk, half-stunning him. Before his head stopped whirling a powerful arm grasped his own, and though he struck out at the fellow with his other fist and tried to squirm out of his grasp, all his efforts were unavailing against his bulky opponent.

Jimmy had no better fortune. He was handicapped by his fat, and when two captors closed in on him at once he had no chance.

The boys were pale and panting, but they faced their enemies boldly as the latter turned their lights upon them and took stock of their prisoners.

"So we've got you fresh kids at last," snarled one of them, whom the boys recognized as the man with the gun. "Didn't I tell you what you'd get if you didn't keep your noses out of our business and stick to your own end of the island?"

"The owner of the island told us we could go anywhere we wanted to on it," replied Herb.

"None o' your lip," snapped his captor. "We don't care what no owner said. We're runnin' this thing to suit ourselves. What you're goin'

to get will be a plenty. For two cents I'd throw you into the ocean. Come along."

The men grabbed the boys by the collar and yanked them roughly to the beach, where a man was standing who seemed, by the deference the others paid him, to be the leader of the gang.

"Found these brats in the wood spyin' on us, Cap," reported one of the men. "What'll we do with 'em?"

The chief, an ugly-looking ruffian, scanned the boys with an evil eye.

"I know what I'd do with 'em if we were at sea," he replied. "It would be over the rail for theirs. Dead men tell no tales. How long have you guys been in them woods?"

"A couple of hours," answered Herb.

"An' why was you there?"

Herb gave no answer.

"Why don't you answer the cap'n when he speaks to you?" demanded his captor, giving Herb a stinging slap in the face.

"I was there because I had a right to be there," replied Herb desperately.

"That's enough," snapped the leader. "I know well enough why he was there. If he's been there two hours, he's seen too much. But he'll never get a chance to snitch. It's curtains for them. We'll take 'em with us when we sail, an'

they might as well be sayin' their prayers right now."

There was a wicked glare in the man's eyes that told the boys all too well what he had resolved on. Once at sea, they would get short shrift.

"What'll we do with 'em in the meantime, Cap?" asked one of Jimmy's captors, whom the boys recognized as "Bat Ear."

The chief pondered for a moment.

"I need all of you men just now," he answered. "Give 'em in charge of a bunch of them dagoes. Tell 'em that they'll all be jugged if they don't keep close watch over 'em. Them guys all have their stilettos, an' they know how to use 'em. Tell 'em to stick a knife between their ribs if the kids try to make a break."

"An' about the fellers that got away?" asked Bat Ear. "Oughtn't we to send some men up to the stone house an' clean 'em out?"

"We haven't the time and we haven't the men to spare for that," replied the leader impatiently. "Them kids is shiverin' in their shoes jest now. They can't get away from the island, an' even if they did, they wouldn't be in time to give an alarm. Now hurry up and do as I tell you."

Bat Ear and his companions dragged the boys to a group of Italians squatting on the beach. Bat Ear knew enough of their language to talk

with them, and that he was giving them the strict directions of the chief was evident from their scowls and nods. Two or three of them took out their stilettos and felt the edges significantly.

The boys were thrown down into the center of the group, while Bat Ear and his fellows went back to their leader for further orders.

Jimmy and Herb were in the depths of despair. They knew that they were in the power of desperate men who would stop at no enormity if they felt their safety demanded it. Again and again the ominous words of the leader recurred to them:

"Over the rail for theirs!"

"I guess we're up against it for fair," muttered Jimmy gloomily.

"Looks like it," responded Herb, nursing his sore cheek.

"I'm glad Bob and Joe got off, though," added Jimmy.

One of the Italians here interfered and jabbered something that the boys interpreted as a command to stop talking, reinforcing his command by a gesture with his knife.

For more than an hour they sat there dejected, heart-sick, and brooding. Then from behind them came the hoot of an owl.

It would have brought the boys up with a jerk had they not remembered in time and curbed

the impulse. But they looked at each other with the same thought in their eyes.

Twice the hoot was repeated. Then a moment later came the plaintive notes of a whippoorwill.

The last was a signal that the boys had frequently used. It meant: "Be ready for a break."

As unostentatiously as possible, Jimmy and Herb summoned up their muscles for a dash. Their captors had ceased to be very alert and were jabbering among themselves, only occasionally casting a glance at their captives, whose dejected pose had put them off their guard.

Again came the call of the whippoorwill, and Bob and Joe burst suddenly from a clump of bushes just behind their captive chums, each with a heavy club in his hand.

They leaped upon the group of Italians, their clubs swinging like flails, knocking the foreigners right and left. For a moment there was the wildest confusion. Yells of surprise, fright, and rage rent the air.

The next moment the Radio Boys were racing through the woods.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN HOT PURSUIT

THROUGH the black night the four Radio Boys rushed, wings given to their feet by the crashing branches in their rear as their enemies, rallying from their surprise, streamed after them.

But the onslaught of Bob and Joe had thrown their foes into such confusion that the boys had gained a good start and were many rods in the lead. This time there were no enemies in front to intercept them, so there was no need to scatter.

Keeping close together, they rushed on with all the speed their desperate need could summon. Even Jimmy outdid himself, and when at times he failed to keep pace with the others Bob and Joe took an arm on either side and helped him on.

The boys knew that they were outracing their foes from the growing faintness of the sounds behind them. But they did not relax their efforts in the slightest. They were bent on reaching the old stone house and barring it against the smug-

glers, if the pursuit should carry them so far.

A big boulder loomed up in front of them. They skirted the edge of it. As they did so, Bob, who was leading, felt the earth give way beneath him.

He plunged headlong into a deep hole, and the others were so close behind him that simultaneously with his cry of consternation they all fell in after him. All of them were more or less bruised, but Jimmy had the breath knocked completely out of him.

They disentangled themselves and scrambled to their feet, all except Jimmy, who was almost strangling with the effort to get his breath. The others lifted him to his feet, but he crumpled back to the ground, gasping wildly.

They thumped him on the back, and presently his breath began to come back. But he was still weak and hardly in shape for walking, to say nothing of running.

In the meantime the sound of racing footsteps was growing terribly louder.

Bob reached an instant decision.

"No use, fellows," he whispered. "Jimmy can't run and we can't carry him. We'll have to crouch down here and take our chance. If they should light on us, Joe and I have still got our clubs. If they get us, they'll know, anyway, that they've been in a fight."

The boys made themselves as small as possible, scarcely daring to breathe. The footsteps drew nearer. They could hear snarls of alarm and rage as their foes called to each other in the darkness.

Luckily none of their enemies passed close to the rock. They streamed by on either side at a little distance. They were panting from their exertions, and the boys conjectured that they could not keep up the pursuit much longer.

Jimmy by this time was in condition again. But now they were in a dilemma. The pursuers were in front of them, and if they went on toward the stone house, they might meet the rascals returning. On the other hand, if they stayed where they were, the enemy might stumble on them on their way back to the beach.

They weighed the chances and decided to stay.

It was not long before their enemies gave up the chase, and the boys could hear them returning. Again there was a period of terrible tension, and then to their infinite relief they heard the men pass at a little distance. Not till all sounds had stilled did the Radio Boys prepare to sally forth from their retreat.

"Guess the coast is clear at last," murmured Bob, rising from his cramped position. "Hello, what's this?"

His hand had come in contact with what seemed

to be part of an iron chain, partly imbedded in the excavation. He could tell from the feel of it that it was covered with scales of rust.

"What is it?" asked Joe.

"A chain," replied Bob. "How on earth did this get here? And the links—by George, the links are square! Does that mean anything to you, fellows?"

His excitement was so great that it was all he could do to keep from shouting.

"Just like the chain on the old map!" gasped Jimmy.

"The Fordice treasure!" exclaimed Herb.

"Oh, if we dared to strike a match!" ejaculated Joe.

"I'll bet, if we did, we'd find this boulder was the bulldog rock," asserted Herb.

"I think that's likely," returned Bob. "But we can't make a light, and, besides, we've got something else to do just now. This hole will be here to-morrow, but the smugglers won't. We've got to beat it for the house. Perhaps help has come by this time and we'll be needed as guides. Let's hustle now." He set the example by leaping out of the hole, the others following.

They made rapid time, and as they came in sight of the house they found it was brilliantly lighted up. Their hearts leaped at the sight.

"Glory Hallelujah!" panted Bob. "That means

help has come! That is," he added, as a second thought struck him, "unless the smugglers have beaten us to it."

"Not a chance!" declared Joe. "If that were the case, they'd douse the lights and be lying low to trap us. Besides, there's the motor boat lying in the inlet."

A few more strides brought the boys to the door. They burst into the hall and then into the living room, where Mr. Fordice was consulting with a group of federal agents.

Mr. Fordice leaped to his feet and rushed toward the Radio Boys, trying to embrace them all at the same time.

"You're safe!" he exclaimed with infinite relief. "When we found no one here we knew that some of you had gone to rescue the others, and we were afraid you had all been captured."

"Bob and Joe knocked a lot of Italians endways, and then we all legged it for home," panted Jimmy.

In a few hurried words the boys explained the situation.

"All right, let's go," directed the leader of the force, a tall, soldierly looking man named Lieutenant Wilson. "Those fellows don't know we're here, and we'll round up the whole bunch. There's a cutter making for the island that will get to the south end just about the same time that

we do. Then we'll have the rascals between two fires."

The party set out at once, the boys acting as guides. On the way Mr. Fordice explained his long absence.

"I found that the injury to Nellie was slight," he said. "But that to Rose was severe, and I couldn't leave the hospital until I knew that she was out of danger. I tried several times to get you on the radio, but each time none of you happened to be at the house."

"We've been spending many of our nights in the woods keeping tabs on the smugglers," explained Bob. "Probably that's the reason you didn't get us. I'm mighty glad that the girls are all right again—if Rose is all right, Mr Fordice? She'll be left with some—"

"No, Bob. Thank you. There will be no permanent injury and no disfigurement."

The party reached the fringe of trees bordering the beach. A scene of feverish activity met their eyes. Consternation seemed to reign among the smugglers, who were talking excitedly among themselves and pointing out to sea.

From the south could be seen the lights of a large vessel coming rapidly toward the island.

"The cutter!" exclaimed Lieutenant Wilson, with deep satisfaction. "Now we've got them!"

The excitement among the smugglers was fast

increasing. Some of them, including Bat Ear and the chief, jumped into the rowboat and put off for the motor boat, which lay at a little distance from the beach.

"Let them go," directed Lieutenant Wilson, as some of his aids looked at him inquiringly. "The cutter will take care of them. We'll get the big haul right here."

The coast-guard vessel came to a stop and lowered two boatloads of men, who rowed swiftly toward the beach.

Escape in that direction was now cut off, and the panic-stricken throng on the beach made a break for the woods.

"Fire over their heads," ordered Lieutenant Wilson. "We don't want to kill."

A volley of shots rang out!

CHAPTER XXV

FINDING THE TREASURE

THERE were shouts of surprise and alarm as the shots passed over the heads of the smugglers and the Italians. They fell back, tumbling over each other, not knowing but some of their comrades had fallen and fearing they would be the next.

Lieutenant Wilson took immediate advantage of their demoralized condition, and stepped quickly into the open, revolver in hand.

"Surrender!" he called. "We've got you surrounded. Resistance is useless. The next time we shoot we'll shoot to kill."

Even while he was speaking the boats from the cutter grounded on the beach and heavily armed coast guards jumped out and came running up the sands.

The darkness, the surprise, the lack of a leader, and the unknown number of the men in the woods, had their natural effect. Some of the smugglers had drawn revolvers and many of

the Italians were handling their stilettos. But with enemies coming upon them from all sides, they did not dare to use the weapons and stood in a huddled and demoralized mass awaiting their fate.

Lieutenant Wilson called his force from the woods, and with the coast guard men from the cutter ringed their prisoners in a circle.

"Come forward, one by one," commanded the lieutenant sharply.

Sullenly the outlaws obeyed. Each one was disarmed in turn and then handed over to the coast-guard men for transfer to the cutter.

Baleful glances were cast at the Radio Boys by both the smugglers and the foreigners, who had no difficulty in guessing that the lads were the cause of their undoing.

"It's too bad that Bat Ear and that scoundrel of a chief got away," murmured Jimmy.

"They won't get far," prophesied Bob. "The cutter will—"

His words were cut short by a tremendous explosion.

A great wave of flame sprang up from the sea, and in it could be seen a mass of débris shooting up into the air. The illumination showed the cutter standing off the coast unharmed, but no trace of any other boat could be seen.

"That must have been the motor boat," said Herb, in a tense tone.

"That's what it was," replied Lieutenant Wilson. "They must have been careless with the gasoline. And the fellows must have had a big supply on board, too, by the noise it made. Of course, the cutter will send out boats to try to pick up the survivors, if there are any, but it isn't likely that any one escaped."

His conjecture turned out to be true. All of the lawless men on the motor boat perished. Violent men, they had come to a violent end.

It took some time to transfer the prisoners to the cutter, but at last the work was completed. Lieutenant Wilson and his men were the last to depart. He shook hands warmly with Mr. Fordice and the Radio Boys.

"You boys have earned the thanks of your Government," he said to the latter. "Boys don't come any pluckier. Good-bye and good luck."

The Radio Boys, with their host, watched the lights of the cutter until they vanished in the distance. Then, with wearied bodies but light hearts, they retraced their way to the old stone house.

"Joe Brown or no Joe Brown, I guess there isn't any question now as to who owns Signal Island," chuckled Joe.

"And all that may be on it," put in Bob.

Something significant in his tone aroused the curiosity of Mr. Fordice.

"Just what do you mean by that?" he inquired.

"We've been so busy and excited that we haven't had a chance to tell you about it," replied Bob. "But we think we may have found the hiding place of the Fordice treasure."

"Sure as shooting," Jimmy burst out, and then went on to tell—with many interruptions and much help from his chums—about the finding of the secret drawer, the old map, and the presence of the square-linked chain in the hole into which the boys had tumbled a few hours before.

"Of course, we may be kidding ourselves," Jimmy finished, "but if that old chain doesn't mean something, I miss my guess."

"I believe you're right!" cried Mr. Fordice, almost as wrought up about the matter as the boys themselves. "It sounds convincing. We'll hunt up that hole the first thing to-morrow morning. You boys are wonders. In two weeks you've found out more about this island of mine than I have in fifty years. And in this matter of the smugglers, you've borne yourselves magnificently."

Tired as the boys were that night, they were up bright and early the next morning, and after a hasty breakfast repaired with their host to the

place that now engrossed all their thoughts.

They had the vicinity pretty clearly in their minds, and they had been searching less than an hour when a cry from Bob announced that he had found the hole.

"And this rock!" he shouted, his excitement growing as he surveyed it. "Just like a bulldog! Look at the ears! Look at the muzzle!"

Seen at a certain angle the resemblance was convincing, and the boys' blood rose to fever heat.

They could see now that the hole had been part of an underground excavation that had been roofed over with brick and then covered with earth. The bricks had loosened from age and storms, and Bob's leap upon the roof had been the last thing needed to cave it in.

"Hand me that spade, Herb," directed Bob, as he threw off his coat. "We're going to find something better than clam shells this time."

He worked steadily, directing his efforts toward uncovering the chain. They found that it was a long one, leading some distance into the earth, and it was necessary to make a deep trench as they followed its course along. All of them, including Mr. Fordice, took their turns at the digging, yet it was nearly noon before Joe, who at the moment was doing the work, struck his spade against a heavy metal box.

"I've found it! I've found it!" he yelled.

All jumped in then, using their hands or knives to supplement the work of the spade, and in a short time they were able to dislodge the box and bring it out on the grass.

It was no easy task, for the box was heavy. Their hearts beat high as they gathered about it. What had the box, now rusted and discolored, hidden for more than a hundred years?

The lock still held, and the hinges had to be broken with the spade. A united pull brought up the top, and all started back amazed, thrilled, and filled with delight at what stood revealed.

Gold! Gold of all nations! Great-great-grandfather Fordice had traded largely with most of the countries of the world. English sovereigns, French louis d'or, Spanish doubloons, Portuguese moidores, Dutch guelders, Italian ducats, and other coins less well known from India, China, Japan and other countries of the Far East.

Silver! francs, pesetas, shillings, including some of the pine tree shillings of early American days, tarnished, almost black, but silver just the same.

Mr. Fordice and the boys bent over the treasure, babbling incoherent things, scarcely knowing what they were saying, so completely had they been carried off their feet.

"What do you suppose it amounts to, Mr. For-

dice?" gasped Bob, when they had regained some degree of sanity.

"Many thousands of dollars," replied their host. "Just as bullion, its value would be great. But many of the coins will be worth far more than their face value to collectors because of their rarity. It will take weeks, probably months, before we can get an accurate estimate. But there will be a very handsome stake for all of us."

"But it's your money!" exclaimed the Radio Boys in chorus.

"Mine?" returned Mr. Fordice. "Nothing like that. It's yours as much as mine. I'd never have got a cent of it if it hadn't been for you boys. No, whatever it finally amounts to, it will be divided into five parts, share and share alike."

The boys protested that this was too much, since the money belonged to Mr. Fordice by right of descent and was found on his land. Finally it was arranged that half the treasure should go to the owner of Signal Island and the other half to the boys.

With their hearts filled with exultation, they carried the box to the house, where for several days they classified and arranged the coins, all of which, apart from their intrinsic value, were invested with the glamour of romance.

"I guess Jimmy was a nut when he kept on

insisting there was treasure on the island!" gloated that individual.

"We've got to hand it to you, old scout," admitted Herb, and the others agreed. "We were nuts to make fun of you."

"And I was Zinc-Tooth when you wanted to be especially funny," went on Jimmy, who could not forbear pressing his advantage.

"Take it all back," apologized Joe. "From now on you're Gold-Tooth."

The little group on Signal Island read with interest the newspapers brought over by the motor boat in which the capture of the smugglers was narrated in detail, with full credit given to the boys for their gallant work. Later on, when the trial took place, the Italians were deported to their native land while the smugglers got long prison terms. The suave Joe Brown was exposed as the brains of the gang, and went to prison with the rest.

"We mustn't get too chesty," remarked Bob, after he had read a particularly glowing report of the boys' exploits, "for we couldn't have done a thing without one helper that doesn't get much mention."

"Who was that?" asked Joe wonderingly.

"This," replied Bob, as he patted lovingly the radio sending set. "Without the old radio our names would have been mud."

"Right you are!" agreed Jimmy. "And without the radio Herb and I would probably have gone over the rail."

"Score another for radio," said Herb fervently. "The most wonderful thing in the world!"

All too soon the news came that the school sessions were to be resumed, and the boys had to tear themselves away. Mr. Fordice was still busy in ascertaining the worth of the treasure, and arranged to send the boys their shares as soon as he knew the total value, a promise that he kept to the letter, with the result that each of the boys received a sum in excess of six thousand dollars.

The parting between Mr. Fordice and the Radio Boys was very affectionate.

"This has been the happiest period of my life," their host said, as he bade them good-bye. "You're the finest specimens of boyhood I ever came across! I only wish you were my sons. It was surely a lucky day for me when I brought you down to Signal Island."

THE END

THE RADIO BOYS ON SIGNAL ISLAND

ALLEN CHAPMAN

Grosset & Dunlap